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Children and Musical Play: An Ethnographic Case Study

By

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To my parents, Elsa and Henry Hartviksen, who understood the importance of music for children and to my wonderful husband, Murray, for his constant love and support.

Abstract

This qualitative study describes the activities of a class of junior kindergarten children as they engaged in musical play. The research tools of ethnography were used to design the study, collect the data, and interpret the results.

Data indicated that when children are engaged in musical play they sing, play instruments, move, listen, read, write, and compose music and also use music as a stimulus for dramatic play. They develop skills that are associated with music literacy, cognition, creativity, and emotional and social development.

Implications for early childhood teaching practice include the acknowledgement of the importance of including long, uninterrupted periods of musical play time as part of early childhood music experiences in order that children may develop many of the skills of music in collaboration with their peers. During extended periods of musical play, teachers have opportunities to observe children's musical development and make curricular and planning decisions based on their observations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"I like to make music!"

The voice of a four year old child during musical play

The importance of play and the relationship between play and learning in the lives of children has long been recognized by early childhood educators and philosophers (Bedrova & Leong, 1996; Corsaro, 1985; Erikson, 1963; Ellis, 1973; Fleer, 1999; Froebel, 1912; Frost, 1984; Huizinga, 1950; Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1951; Smilansky, 1968; Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales, & Alward, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Play has been viewed as a positive contributor to the cognitive, emotional, and social development of children. Piaget (1951) indicated the significance of play in children's acquisition of cognitive skills. Smilansky & Shefatya (1990) extended and expanded Piaget's ideas and added ways in which adults could assist children in developing their play. Bedrova & Leong (1996) also contributed to the body of knowledge and confirmed the positive influence of teachers in children's play development. Glover (1999) suggested that play was important to children as they constructed knowledge.

Educational philosophers and researchers (Froebel, 1912; Huizinga, 1950) acknowledged the role of play in the emotional growth of children. According to Corsaro (1997), Erikson (1963), Fleer (1999), Parten (1933), and Vygotsky (1978) play also promotes social development in children as they progress through the model situations which they create for themselves.

In the past twenty years, a few researchers have explored the possibility of using play as a teaching tool within the early childhood music teaching environment. While the number of documented

studies is small (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Moorhead & Pond, 1978; Smithrim, 1997; Stevens, 2003), various authors of early childhood textbooks and articles have acknowledged and advocated the inclusion of play as a teaching/learning strategy in the early childhood music classroom (Alvarez & Berg, 2002; Andress, 1980, 1998; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995; Choksy, 1981; Forrai, 1998; Kenney, 1995; Littleton, 1989; McDonald & Simons, 1989; Tarnowski, 1999). Recent research in early childhood teaching practice (Miranda, 2004) revealed that children are comfortable in their learning when play is included.

The advantages of musical play have been noted in articles, textbooks, and some related research (Miller, 1987; Temmerman, 2000). Important pedagogues such as Kodaly, Orff, and Dalcroze have acknowledged the important role of play in musical learning and the place of play in children's learning has been supported by national organizations such as Music Educators National Conference.

Research has told us that play in early childhood is vital to children's learning. This being the case, it would then appear that play should be included in teaching strategies employed in all subject areas including music.

Current Practices in Early Childhood Music Education

Early childhood music programming in Alberta schools is guided by the *Kindergarten Program Statement* (Alberta Learning, 2000). Music is found within the learning area "Creative and Cultural Expression." Specific Learner Expectations assist teachers in planning curriculum, preparing the learning environment, and implementing the lessons in order to support children in successfully meeting the expectations. Words and phrases such as "explores and expresses,"

"explores and experiments," "recognizes and responds," "responds, participates, and experiences" (Alberta Learning, 2000) all provide teachers with the starting points in planning for teaching. Although these words and phrases imply active involvement on the part of the children, there is no actual reference to the use of musical play as a teaching strategy within the "Creative and Cultural Expression" section of the document.

Primary teachers are of course free to supplement the provincial document with curriculum materials in publications such as *Achieving Musical Understanding - Concepts and Skills Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8* produced by the Coalition for Music Education in Canada, Canadian Music Educators Association. Documents such as this provide specific guidance for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten music programs. It specifically states that "frequent opportunities for experimentation and free play within a music environment are vital for four year olds" (p. 16). This statement is followed by a list of a many musical activities which are recommended for pre-kindergarten children. However, although this document is available, it is unlikely that kindergarten teachers in Alberta would be aware of its existence. It is relatively new (2000) and would more likely to be used by music specialists (full time music teachers) who would have encountered it at provincial or national music workshops or conferences.

The Music Educators National Conference - The National Association for Music Education, an American professional music education organization, is another source of information for curriculum development in pre-kindergarten music. Within the document, *The School Music Program: A New Vision*, there is a section that is devoted to Pre-kindergarten which clearly states the importance of play in the education of the young child, "children's play is their

work" (p. 1). Within the curriculum guidelines, this organization advocates a balanced program for early childhood consisting of group music making along with play experiences. It states, "Play is the primary vehicle for young children's growth . . . early childhood music experiences should occur in child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play environments" (p. 2). The document elaborates on the importance of play in the music environment, "as a result of their experiences with music, four year olds should initiate both independent and collaborative play with musical materials" (p. 3).

As this resource document is an American publication, and is also directed toward music specialists, it is not widely used by Canadian kindergarten or preschool teachers. Even though it acknowledges the importance of including play in the music teaching environment, it seems unlikely that kindergarten teachers in Alberta would use this publication to guide the planning and implementing of their early childhood music programs.

Lack of specific direction from provincial learning documents, combined with inconsistencies in methodologies, materials, teaching environments, strategies, and teacher preparation related to early childhood music programs has long been a concern in the elementary music education profession (Andress, 1980, 1989, 1998; Scott-Kassner, 1992; Upitis, 1990). A variety of philosophies and styles of teaching music are reflected in the teaching systems used in primary music classes. "There are 'methods,' which provide a great deal of structure for both musical content and teaching strategy, as well as 'approaches' which emphasize exploration and experimentation" (Hedden & Woods, 1992, p. 669). According to Atterbury (1992), elementary music instruction is very different from other kinds of elementary instruction because "children are continually involved in group music producing

through singing, listening, moving, and playing classroom instruments" (p. 597).

As a result, some researchers argue that children are often deprived of the opportunity for free musical play. Addison (cited in Smithrim, 1997) indicated that children are not given the opportunity to play with musical materials in the way that they are with other play objects. Smithrim (1997) claimed that when children enter into spontaneous play it often "is unnoticed or undesirable" (p. 18). Kalekin-Fishman (1986) reported that,

> teachers do not single out either melodic or rhythmic manipulations of sound for attention or reflection. Creative efforts with plastic materials are treated quite differently. Drawings, clay figures, and block constructions are regularly praised for quality. Pieces of work are often held up for the whole class to admire. Spontaneous productions of sound, on the other hand, are either ignored or dismissed as "noise" and a "nuisance." (p. 61)

Smithrim (1997) reported that teachers and parents were generally unsupportive of the idea of incorporating musical play in early childhood music programs. She continued by stating that parents were happy with structured early childhood music programs as they were and supported the status quo.

Andress (1998) addressed the current practice in teaching music to preschool children and indicated that generally it is activity oriented with an emphasis first on entertainment and second on the educational value. "This random activity approach, although fun, is a fragmented program that lacks a well-defined, organized curriculum plan of guiding young children's musical growth" (p. 39). Glover (1999)

claimed that "when we look in many of our early childhood classrooms, and when we talk with teachers and parents, there is undeniable evidence that many adults undervalue children's play" (p. 13). If this is true in the general early childhood classroom it would more than likely be true in the early childhood music classroom where teachers often implement highly structured, teacher-directed activities (Tarnowski, 1999).

Although the benefits of musical play have been discussed, (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Moorhead & Pond, 1978; Smithrim, 1997; Stevens, 2003), the prescribed curriculum documents for Alberta early childhood teachers have provided no recommendations or suggestions for the inclusion of musical play as a teaching strategy, even though the profession seems to believe that musical play can enhance and contribute to children's learning.

Purpose of and Rationale for the Study

The historical development of the theories of play, in conjunction with the small, but recent research on musical play in early childhood, provided the groundwork for this research on musical play and its possible place in the early childhood classroom. Researchers like Andress (1998) have emphasized that the importance of play in the lives of children has been documented and we no longer need to be convinced of its importance. "Instead, we are now at the stage of how to most effectively accommodate a musical play program in a classroom setting" (pp. 163-4).

There is much to be learned from observing and recording the activities of children while they are at play. Through observation we can learn much about such topics as their interests, activities,

circumstances under which they learn, and how they interact with each other.

Before considering how to best accommodate a musical play program within the classroom as Andress (1998) suggests, it would be advantageous to first observe and document what children do during times of musical play. It appears that the research has not yet clearly told us what children do when they engage in musical play. This, as a starting point, will provide an important base for understanding more about children and musical play as well as providing an important base for continued research in this area of early childhood music education.

From the few existing studies, there has been no consistent direction in the researching of musical play. Instead, we have seen a variety of musical play related topics such as teaching practice and musical play, learning environments and musical play, and adult behaviours that enhance or extinguish musical play. The recommendations for further research have no clear base or common thread other than the advocation of musical play for young children. The voices and actions of the children will provide an important perspective from which educators and researchers can learn.

Research Question and Methodology

Ethnographic tools and techniques were employed in the design, data collection, and results interpretation of this case study. The study involved a class of junior kindergarten children and sought to answer the research question, "What do children do when they are given the opportunity for musical play?" The ethnographic nature of the study attempted "to understand what is there," [rather than] "look for what should be there" (Finnan, 1982, p. 377). Insight into children

and what they do can be gained through observations within the educational context.

In summary, the research question, "What do children do when they are given opportunities for musical play?" may provide an important base upon which we can speculate about the role of musical play within the music education of the young child.

Significance of the Study

From the few documented studies of children and musical play found in the literature, there are several recommendations regarding further research. Smithrim (1997) suggested a study be conducted comparing a teacher-led program with a program "with substantial periods of free play" (p. 23). Stevens (2003) recommended "the intertwining of formal lessons and free play activities" and felt that over time this would contribute to "the basis for a solid music program and optimal learning" (p. 47). Berger & Cooper (2003) advised further research on the interactions of children and adults during free musical play in order to focus on behaviours that enhance or extinguish musical play. Tarnowski (1999) advocated that teachers create learning environments which are conducive to musical play, but did not specify a recommendation for further research. Instead, she provided practical advice for teachers.

Observing, noting, and reflecting on the activities of children as they participate in musical play could provide a base from which research could be aligned and then continued. The significance of play in the lives of children has been acknowledged and documented. The findings of this study will contribute to increasing the small body of existing research in musical play as well as providing a base for this

area of play research.

CHAPTER 2
RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

To shape the framework for this study it was important to move from investigating the seminal writings and research on play to defining musical play and reviewing and analyzing research specific to musical play. This review is followed by an overview of the advantages of musical play, implementation of a musical play program with attention to the role of the teacher, and characteristics of the teaching environment. Concluding remarks in the chapter will focus on possible directions for studying children's musical play.

What is Play?

Historically, educators and philosophers have provided numerous descriptions, theories, and definitions of play. Anthropological studies, through excavations of toys and drawings depicting play scenes, revealed the existence of play in the lives of primitive people (Mitchell, 1937). "Plato and Aristotle attached practical significance to play, considering it valuable in learning such subjects as arithmetic and construction skills" (Frost, 1984, p. 1). Fleer (1999) informs us that prior to Rousseau's work, play was not given serious consideration, rather, it was either ignored or considered practice work by theorists and philosophers. Frost (1984) states that play was also regarded as "useful recuperation from work" (p. 1).

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were serious efforts to build theories of play. Mead "studied the relationship

of play to the development of the sense of self" (Van Hoorn et al, 2003, p. 31). He described play as being categorized in three stages:

1. *Play Stage* - preschool and primary years provide impetus and context for children to see themselves as unique human beings within the community of others; role transformations from self to others have very little elaboration.
2. *Game Stage* - role play becomes more complex; the " 'I' aspect of self is coordinated with complex representations of viewpoints of others about the 'I'" (Van Hoorn et al, 2003, p. 33).
3. *Generalized Other Stage* - In this stage, games with rules become of interest when the child begins to coordinate the " 'I' of self with multiple 'me's' and also adopts a metacognitive stance regarding the framework within which action takes place" (Van Hoorn et al, 2003, p. 33).

Parten (1932) developed a model for observing the development of children's play. She studied the social behaviour of children in a parent-cooperative preschool and hypothesized a continuum of social participation in play ranging from onlooker behaviour to solitary play, parallel play, and two forms of group play. Van Hoorn et al. (2003) provided the following explanation of Parten's categories.

1. *Onlooker Behaviour* is described as a child watching ongoing play episodes who is either reluctant to join others or is scanning for an opening in order to join in.
2. *Solitary Play* is playing without overt interaction with peers. Parten (1932) found this to be typical of the youngest children in a group. The research of Monighan-Nourot, Scales, & Van Hoorn with Almy, 1987; Rubin et al. 1983 (cited in Van Hoorn et al. 2003) claimed that solitary play might provide a context for

complex dramatic play (e.g. with toy animals) or as an occasion for a rest or a change from the demands of others. This research team felt that children need privacy and solitary play as well as opportunities for sharing and group play.

3. *Parallel Play* is "play with shared materials or physical proximity without attempts to coordinate play" (Van Hoorn et al., 2003, p. 38).
4. *Associative Play* is group play in which children "share and coordinate materials and space in proximity to one another but they lack true cooperation" (Van Hoorn et al., 2003, p. 39).
5. *Cooperative Play* involves "sophisticated efforts to negotiate joint play themes and constructions with peers and is characterized by children stepping in and out of their play to establish roles or events" (Van Hoorn et al., 2003, p. 39).

Froebel (1912) defined play as "the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul" (p. 50). He continued to describe play as a "copy of human life at all stages and in all relations" and said that it "induces joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer repose, and peace with all the world" (p. 50). Froebel (1912) described three categories of play:

1. imitations of the doings of actual life
2. spontaneous applications of what he has learnt in school
3. impulsive manifestations of any and every form of mental vitality (p. 96).

He felt that "child's play is not merely sport; it is full of meaning and of serious import" (Froebel, 1912, p. 50).

Erikson (1963) emphasized the importance of play on the inner life of the child. In answering the question, "What is infantile play?" he

stated that "it is not the equivalent of adult play, it is not recreation" (p. 220). He elaborated by saying, "the playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward to new stages of mastery"(p. 220). He then continued to define child's play as "the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning" (p. 220).

Huizinga (1950) defined play as a "free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly" (p. 13). He described play as free, temporary, and limited. "It contains its own course and meaning" (p. 9) and includes tension and therefore an element of chance. He went on to state that "music and dancing were pure play" (p. 173).

Piaget (1951) espoused play as performing a major role in the child's growing mental abilities. He regarded play as "an end in itself, whereas work and other non-ludic behaviors involve an aim not contained in the activity as such" (p. 147). In his descriptions of play, Piaget emphasized that "play is an activity for pleasure" with a "relative lack of organization" (p. 148). He also claimed that "imaginative play is a symbolic transposition which subjects things to the child's activity without rules or limitations" (Piaget, 1951, p. 87).

Piaget's stages of play can be described in the following way:

Stage 1 This stage of practical or functional play is one in which the child repeats observed activities.

Stage 2 This stage involves the child's use of mental representations in which objects stand for other objects. During this stage, Piaget noted evidence of constructive play, in which objects are used to build

and create other objects; and dramatic play in which children create pretend situations and roles using gesture and language. During dramatic play, children create and negotiate roles.

Stage 3 This stage involves games with rules and is marked by the child's use of external rules to initiate, regulate, maintain, and terminate social interaction.

Piaget (1951) described "three main types of structure which characterize children's games and determine their detailed classification"(p. 110). They include practice games, symbolic games (these imply representation of an absent object), and games with rules (regulations are imposed by the group and the violation of these regulations carries a sanction). In his further explanation of games with rules he states, "Although several games with rules are common to children and adults, many are specifically children's handed down from one generation to the next without adult influence" (p. 113).

Piaget (1951) believed that there is a stage of play that occurs whenever a new learning is taking place. In his description of the three successive stages of play he emphasized that the first stage or the child's first form of play does not "belong specifically to the first two years or to the preverbal period. They are to be found throughout childhood, whenever a new skill is acquired there is practice for the sake of practice, accompanied by the pleasure of 'being the cause' or the feeling of power" (p. 113). This idea accentuates the importance of play and its contribution to learning.

Piaget's ideas of play have been extended by two contemporary researchers, Smilansky & Shefatya (1990). They state that "the development of play depends on the social context and adult guidance" and showed through their research "that adults can

successfully increase children's level of play. This increased level of play had a positive effect on other cognitive skills" (p. 125). Smilansky (1968) refined and expanded Piaget's cognitive play categories and provided teachers with the following guide to assist in the observation and examination of children's play.

1. *Functional Play* - Children repeat (imitate) actions.
2. *Constructive Play* - Children have opportunities to create.
3. *Dramatic Play* - Children take on roles and imitate others.
4. *Games with Rules* - Children learn to control behaviour, action, and reactions within time limits.

Vygotsky (1978) had a more integrated view of the value of play in the development of children. He felt that "the influence of play on a child's development is enormous" (p. 96) and that "through play the child achieves a functional definition of concepts or objects, and words become parts of a thing" (p. 99). Bedrova & Leong (1996) stated that it was Vygotsky's belief that play promotes cognitive, emotional, and social development which serves as a tool of the mind enabling children to master their own behaviours. Vygotsky (1978) said "Play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; it is as if he were a head taller than himself" (p. 102). Children, through play, are able to reach past themselves. Van Hoorn et al. (2003) felt that "perhaps Vygotsky's most important contribution to understanding play and development is his assertion that every function in development occurs first at the social level and then at the individual level" (p. 30).

In comparing the philosophies of play of both Piaget and Vygotsky, Dockett (1999) said that, according to Piaget, "play is a driving force for development and a mirror for development that has

already occurred" (p. 32), while according to Vygotsky "play is a leading source of both cognitive and effective development" (p. 33) which also has value in social interactions.

Contemporary educators and philosophers continue to define and redefine play. Ellis (1973) said, "Play is commonly considered to be the behavior emitted by an individual not motivated by the end product of the behavior" (p. 2). Advancing the notion that freedom is destroyed if play is interfered with or manipulated was presented. He concluded that if play is considered "free" then it "cannot be controlled or planned for and remain play" (p. 2).

Researchers, Bedrova & Leong (1996) addressed the issue of assisting children with planning their play and through their research found that children have differing levels of play ability and that teachers can assist children in developing their play in the following ways:

1. Ensure that children have enough time for play.
2. Help children plan for their play by asking them to verbalize their plans. Although these plans do not (and may not) necessarily have to be followed, verbalizing ideas helps promote better understanding and establishes the state of shared activity. Children should discuss their plans for play immediately before it is to begin.
3. Monitor the play by making very few suggestions and remaining unobtrusive.
4. Choose appropriate props and toys that have multiple functions.
5. Provide themes that can be extended or revisited from one day to the next.
6. Coach children who need assistance.

7. Suggest or model the weaving together of themes.
8. Model appropriate ways to solve disputes. (p.132)

In her study of play, Fleer (1999) identified three main values of play: cognitive, emotional, and social. She regarded play activities as "culturally defined, valued and interpreted" and found that play "exists as a result of cultural practices" (p. 77).

Corsaro (cited in Van Hoorn et al. p. 39) contended that "play is the primary matrix for socialization in childhood" and indicated that adults and children view play in very different ways. "Adults tend to view children's activities from a 'utility point of view,' which focuses on learning and social and cognitive development [but] children do not know the world from this point of view." Instead, they get strong emotional satisfaction from "producing and participating in what seems to be simple repetitive play" (Corsaro, 1997, p. 123). Harley (1999) maintained that children's play is both personal and purposeful. She claimed that children's play must be carefully observed and documented for by "observing, discussing, reading, writing and telling stories of children's play we begin to understand what it means for children and why every child needs to be a player" (p. 16). Glover (1999) asserted that through play "children actively explore their world, they build on what they already know and do in order to gain new understandings and skills" (p. 6). She acknowledged play as an important part of the process of constructing knowledge for young children.

In summary, research tells us that play is vital to the development of both mental and social abilities in children and its inclusion in the young child's educational environment plays a significant role in learning (Erikson, 1963; Froebel, 1912; Huizinga, 1950; Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1951; Smilansky, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978). If

play contributes significantly in the learning process of children, it would seem that it should play an important role in all areas of learning, including music.

What is Musical Play?

Musical play has been described and discussed by a few researchers and music educators (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995; Littleton, 1999; Tarnowski, 1999). Littleton (in Tarnowski, 1999) states that activities that allow children to explore, improvise, and create with sound make up musical play. In an earlier article Littleton (1989) suggested that "in the experiences of children, the art of play and the art of music merge to provide a unique pathway to learning" (p. 9). She classified musical play as functional, constructive or dramatic and described each in the following way:

1. *Functional musical play* involves the initial exploration, improvisation, and creation.
2. *Constructive musical play* is the natural extension of functional musical play and includes the development of musical structure.
3. *Dramatic musical play* involves children using songs or instruments within a musical or nonmusical play theme.

Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995) emphasized that "singing games, newly invented songs by children, musical improvisations, and compositions that are practiced, preserved and performed repeatedly are examples of musical play at its best" (p. 22). They acknowledged the value of songs that are invented and transmitted by children during free-play time in their successful acquisition of music skills and concepts.

Tarnowski (1999) stated that "musical play may also include vocalizations, rhythmic movement of the body or objects, or playing instruments" (p. 28). She included exploration of inflection and tone colour, rhythmic speech chants, standard songs, and song fragments in the area of vocalization and children's movement responses to heard music and his/her own generated music as well as the movement required to manipulate objects within the area of rhythmic movement. Instrument exploration includes movement or gestural representation.

Research on Musical Play

Combining play with music for preschool children was advocated by Froebel (1887). Berger & Cooper (2003) remind us that "the earliest and most comprehensive research conducted regarding music and preschool children did not occur until much later" (p. 152). Moorhead & Pond (1978) examined preschool music activities at the Pillsbury Foundation School from 1937 - 1951. The program emphasized freedom for the children to creatively experiment and explore music. Equipment was "carefully chosen to furnish the school with such materials as best would enable the children to obtain adequate and satisfying experience" (p. 7). The researchers spent considerable time noting and recording all of the music produced by the children and drew many conclusions regarding the music of young children including their musical choices, activities, interests, and attitudes to music. They concluded that "music for young children is primarily the discovery of sound" (p. 45) and noted that children need a wide variety of materials on which they can produce sound. They confirmed that children need to produce their own music and that children were naturally musical. They observed that when children

were presented with simple instruments they used them "as naturally as blocks or paint" (p. 93). This study revealed that the music of children is like the music of adults and "often is beautifully patterned and most expressive"(p. 93). Children were observed spending long periods of time engaged in musical play both alone and with others. The researchers reported that "young children need the opportunity to experiment freely with music, to build slowly the knowledge and understanding of tone and rhythm that will be a basis for all musical growth. If music is to be language for them, they must not only hear it, but make it their own by constant use" (p. 117). This seminal study provided significant initial research in the area of children's musical play and exploration.

Although many music educators have supported the inclusion of play in early childhood music programs, since the ethnographic research of Moorhead & Pond (1978), there have been very few documented studies in this area of music education.

Miller (1987) reported that "young children are capable of making music freely and spontaneously in their natural environments" (p. 219) and that they can do this without the guidance of teachers. She recommended that the results of the Pillsbury School study be considered and extended into the schools of today.

Following a 13 week study on free musical play with a small group of four year old children, Smithrim (1997) noted the following points regarding musical play:

- free musical play enabled children to develop and demonstrate individual skills, interests, and abilities,
- children filled free musical play time with industry and creative activity without any guidance from the teacher, and

- children did not sing songs as a group or play traditional singing games (p. 23).

She concluded that there is a mismatch between the musical needs of children and institutional consideration; that rather than following peer instructions, children imitate peers; and that music teachers face a difficult challenge when they attempt to change their practice.

While many of the conclusions and recommendations that emerged from this study were focused on teaching practice, the researcher confirmed many of the suggestions made by educators who have supported the inclusion of musical play in early childhood music education programs.

Campbell (1998) suggested that teachers who listen to children while they are at play will discover that children are "accomplished listeners, creators, and performers and should be recognized as the source and launch of designs for their music education" (p. 70).

Temmerman (2000) concluded that preschool children prefer to be actively involved in a variety of activities that interest them. She suggested that this conclusion has implications for planning curriculum content and delivery that positively impacts the attitudes and involvement of children in music

Stevens (2003) reported that five or six times a year, she included free time in her school music program and discovered that the sessions evolved from "chaotic, loud and seemingly nonmusical [into] highly creative and musically stimulating opportunities for . . . students to assign personal meaning to the music they have been exposed to in the formal lesson" (p. 45). This action research led her to conclude that a music program which includes the intertwining of formal lessons and free play activities will "provide the basis for a solid music curriculum and optimal learning" (p. 45).

In a ten week study, Berger & Cooper (2003) observed and documented preschool children and their parents in free and structured musical play environments. Their research revealed that when incorporating musical play in a preschool music program teachers should be aware of the need for children to have both uninterrupted time for play and appropriate materials in the environment. They reported that play was enhanced by the adult valuing of all musical utterances and flexibility during structured lessons. Burnard (2000) confirmed this stance when he stated that "children can talk eloquently about their own musical experience when their creativity is cherished and musical beliefs are respected and accepted" (p. 243).

Miranda (2004), in her study on developmentally appropriate practice for the kindergarten general music classroom, revealed that "when teachers in this study incorporated play and exploration, the children seemed comfortable, since the learning experience matched their developmental strengths" (pp. 50 - 51).

In summary, the research literature indicates that there are a limited number of studies (Berger & Cooper, 2003; Moorhead & Pond, 1978 ; Smithrim, 1997; Stevens, 2003;) that investigate the musical play experiences of young children. Andress (1998) emphasized that the importance of play in the lives of children has been documented and we no longer need to be convinced of its importance. "Instead, we are now at the stage of how to most effectively accommodate a musical play program in a classroom setting" (pp. 163-4).

Advantages of Musical Play

According to Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995) the advantages

of musical play can be described in the following way, "Children's musical play can be the means by which a conceptual understanding of music is more fully developed in the classroom" (p. 22). They also suggested that "the key to successful music learning may be at least partly linked to the songs children know, invent, and transmit to each other while they are at play, and to the music they create on instruments during free play-time" (p. 22). They noted that important music pedagogues like Zoltan Kodaly, Carl Orff, and Emile Jacques - Dalcroze felt that musical play should be "nurtured in the nursery school and continued through the primary grades" (p 22).

Upitis (1991) emphasized that "children must be allowed to create their own ways of structuring the content of the discipline, and much of that structuring can happen through the manipulation of concrete objects through play" (p. 14). She felt that in order for this to happen, teachers must encourage learners "to take intellectual risks" (Upitis, 1992, p. 2).

We are reminded by Forrai (1998) that the aim of music education is not merely to tell children about music theory. Rather, the child should "recognize musical elements and their relationships for himself" (p. 16). She suggested that children can exercise their creativity in playful ways, thereby meeting one of the goals of modern music education - that of "the development of spontaneous creativity arising out of the child's musical experience" (p. 14).

Music exploration and enjoyment is described by Harrison & Pound (1996) as central to the learning process. They stated that encouraging the innate playfulness and curiosity of children will "support both creative and technical development" (p. 237). Kenney (1995) acknowledged the importance of nurturing the natural improvisations of children as tools for expression.

The MENC document, *The School Music Program: Description and Standards* (1986) emphasizes the value of including music activities that allow children opportunities for free exploration that will provide a foundation for creative musical growth.

Moog (1976) discussed the playfulness of singing games and indicated that when children participated in singing games their engagement was "so strong that no child asked to stop once he had started one of these" (p. 121). Miranda (2004) suggested that perhaps the musical engagement of children is related to the playfulness of their experiences.

Singing games are often used as a form of musical play in primary music programs. These games are most often played in large group settings. Many of these activities seem to best fit the final and most complex stage of developmental play - that of games with rules (Littleton, 1989). This suggests that in the primary music classroom environment, children often have not been given opportunities to experience the potential depth of musical play activities, instead, they have moved directly to singing games. Smithrim (1997) stated three reasons why teachers do not provide ample opportunity for free musical play: "lack of attention to play research literature, concern that children won't learn unless they are taught, and concern about noise and behaviour" (p. 18).

Although some singing games do include a certain amount of playfulness and freedom, there is still an element of structure in that certain rules must be followed and generally the game involves a large group of children. Sims (1993) stated that "music learning in early childhood takes place as a result of children's direct personal interactions with musical materials and activities" (p. 19). It appears that singing games do not fit this description of musical play.

Other music educators (Choksy, 1981; Forrai, 1998) acknowledge the contribution that musical play can make in the child's understanding of and participation in music. Choksy stated that "very young children may be helped in developing a relatively high level of musical concepts and skills in all areas - singing, moving, rhythm, the comparatives, musical memory, inner hearing, and listening if these skills and concepts are approached through play activities" (p. 17).

Scott-Kassner (1993) suggested that when children are given free access to instruments they will improvise and make up ideas on the spot. This will be followed with refining ideas through repetition of the patterns. Sims (1993) confirmed this when she stated, "Music learning in early childhood takes place as a result of direct personal interactions with musical materials and activities" (p. 19).

Smithrim (1997) confirmed the following characteristics as advantages of musical play: long periods of absorbed activity, unconventional use of instruments, and peer teaching and modeling. She revealed that "musical free play provides children with opportunity to work and play at their own level of musical development rather than the level the teacher deems appropriate for a particular group of children" (p. 21). Stevens confirmed this when she observed that "children can guide us toward what they need and want to learn, which, in turn, gives new depth and meaning to the skills and concepts they acquire" (p. 47).

Tarnowski (1999) suggested that musical play not only enhances musical understanding but it also contributes to the social, emotional, and physical development of the child. Temmerman (2000) described the positive effect that active involvement can have on the development of positive attitudes toward music learning.

The research and writings of early childhood educators point to

the importance of including musical play in the music education experiences of young children.

Implementation of a Musical Play Program

Role of the Teacher

The development and implementation of a musical play program presents a potentially, educationally sound program for young children and an interesting challenge to teachers. Tarnowski (1999) described the role of the music teacher, who uses musical play, as that of director, observer, and partner. In his/her role as director, the teacher uses demonstration and direct instruction to teach specific skills; while in the role of observer, the teacher provides an environment that is conducive to play but avoids directly entering into children's play. The last role, partner, is a balanced role with neither the teacher nor the children dominating the learning environment. Instead, the roles are equal.

Manolson (cited in Smithrim, 1997) described early childhood music teachers as having four possible roles during their interaction with young children: "the Entertainer, the Director, the Responsive Partner, and the Observer" (p. 17). The Entertainer keeps the children captivated during a music class, the Director has specific goals in mind and organizes the class so that the children receive information and gain knowledge, the Responsive Partner gives both the teacher and the children opportunity to "introduce and adapt the musical activity" (Smithrim, 1997, p. 17), and the Observer watches the children as they play and does not interfere or become involved.

Young & Glover (1998) felt that teachers should use an approach that is balanced between two strategies:

> One is by working from children's own music - listening to it, reflecting back, discussing, making connections to other music. The other is to provide 'building blocks' by introducing musical ideas, exploring them with the class or group together, and using vocabulary to describe what is basically a 'showing and saying' process. (p. 64)

Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1999) discussed the role of the early childhood teacher within the framework of pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation is "mainly about trying to see what is going on in the pedagogical work and what the child is capable of without any predetermined framework of expectations and norms" (p. 145). These researchers pointed out that the developing relationship that occurs between the children (or child) and the teacher presents a starting place for dialogue and trust. They also emphasized that the process uses observation, questioning, reflecting, experimentation, interpretation, and dialogue and involves both the teacher and the children in the partnership. Observing and listening are very important to the role of the teacher during pedagogical documentation in all curricular areas including music.

Young & Glover (1998) indicated that "listening to children in music can challenge many long-held beliefs about the way music should be taught and what the long-term aims of music education should be" (p. 6). They continued by emphasizing that teachers, when they look closely at the activities of children, have the advantage of understanding children and their music.

According to Andress (1980, 1998) the development and implementation of a musical play program requires that the educator has a thorough understanding of children, the theories and research of play, and the knowledge of the role of play in children's learning.

Andress & Feierabend (1993) believe that early childhood music teachers should demonstrate skills and knowledge in both music and teaching and suggested a certification and training program for early childhood music educators. On the other hand, Upitis (1990) argued that "teaching and learning about music need not lie in the hands of 'music specialists' alone, but should be a form of expression and learning that pervades the classroom environment, complementing and supplementing the work of the resident music teacher" (p. 2).

According to Tait (1992), exploration of materials and the use of open-ended teaching strategies should be considered when developing an appropriate pre-kindergarten music program. Chacksfield, Binns, & Robins (1975) recommended that children be allowed to work and experiment with sounds in order that they are not fearful or restricted "as can happen with conventional music techniques" (p. 15). They also stressed the need for allowing "room for the children's creativity and interest to direct the lesson" (p. 84).

Andress (1998) emphasized that as the teacher interacts with the children, he/she serves as a model and partner in music making. The children then "watch, copy what they see, and practice until the ideas become their own" (p. 147). Chacksfield et al. (1975) gave responsibility to teachers to know how to guide children into exploring sound and its possibilities. They maintained that "such avant-garde composers such as Schoenberg, George Self, and Cornelius Cardew have shown, the soundscapes used by today's and tomorrow's composers will not be fitted into a five-line staff" (p. 84). Upitis (1990) criticized teachers who are more concerned about following a particular method than "listening to the voices of their students, then even though the performance results might be commendable . . . something about music as a part of life may be

sacrificed for these performance results" (p. 40). The early childhood educator who invites children to participate in musical play would recognize children as "active constructors of knowledge, not merely passive recipients of information" (Glover, 1999, p. 7).

Teaching Environment

The early childhood teaching environment which incorporates musical play has been discussed by several educators. According to Hodgkin (1985), the creation of a space for learning is one of the teacher's most important roles. Andress (1998), in advocating for the inclusion of play in music settings, stated, "Children learn within a playful environment" (p. 16). She continued by emphasizing that

> play provides a safe place to try on the roles of others, to fantasize about powerful things, to explore new ideas, and to fit parts and pieces of things and the world together. The child's play involves imitation and improvisation; a play-oriented environment is the most effective route for this method of learning. (p. 16)

She also asserted that the effective music environment contains many options for sound exploration which will pique the children's interest and curiosity and "create the desire to be part of the musical play" (p. 68). Within the music play environment, the teacher may include a variety of found objects as well as classroom and orchestral instruments. "Such areas must inherently have musical validity through which the child can enhance musical skills, understanding, and appreciation (p. 164). Moorhead & Pond (1978) pointed out that the child must be able to select from a material and experiential environment which is full and varied.

The unique approach to learning that each child brings to the

environment is important for the teacher to consider. Andress (1998) emphasized that "teachers must provide a variety of physical environments in which children can explore, practice, and strive for mastery at their own pace and level of ability" (p. 58). The music learning environment that incorporates play has the potential of meeting the needs of young children so they can experience and learn about music in a safe and enriching environment. Berger & Cooper (2003) concluded from their study of musical play that children need extended, uninterrupted time for play as well as appropriate materials in the environment. Young & Glover (1998), in their discussion of creating a suitable listening environment, suggested that children in a group should be close to the teacher when focussing on music and having a discussion. They recommended that "different organization will be needed for listening individually so that children will be able to become absorbed in their own responses, carried along by the music" (p. 79). Campbell & Scott-Kassner (1995) pointed out that the child's musical interactions with the adult "are vital not only to their musical independence, but also to their coming into the musical culture itself" (p. 23).

Possible Directions for Studying Children's Musical Play

From the few documented studies of children and musical play found in the literature, there are several recommendations regarding further research. Smithrim (1997) suggested a study be conducted comparing a teacher-led program with a program "with substantial periods of free play" (p. 23). Stevens (2003) recommended "the intertwining of formal lessons and free play activities" and felt that over time this will contribute to "the basis for a solid music curriculum

and optimal learning" (p 47). Berger & Cooper (2003) advised further research on the interactions of children and adults during free musical play in order to focus on behaviours that enhance or extinguish musical play. Tarnowski (1999) advocated that teachers create learning environments which are conducive to musical play, but did not specify a recommendation for further research. Instead, she provided practical advice for teachers.

Smithrim (1997), Stevens (2003), and Tarnowski (1999) all encourage the inclusion of musical play along side formal early childhood music teaching. This change in the structure and organization of music instruction for young children would seem to be beneficial and significant to the music learning of children. The profession knows the impact play can have on learning and the important role that teachers and other adults play in supporting and scaffolding the child's learning.

The significance of play in the lives and education of children has been acknowledged and documented. Musical play has been described and investigated in only four studies. At this point the profession has very little documented information that tells us what children do during musical play. This study seeks to answer the question, "What do children do when they are given the opportunity to engage in musical play?"

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Overview

A description of the research design and procedures used in the study is presented in this chapter. It is a case study that utilizes ethnographic tools in its design, data collection procedures, and interpretation of results. The following topics will be discussed in this chapter: assumptions and rationale, research design, role of the researcher, and data collection procedures.

Assumptions and Rationale

This study of children and musical play is qualitative in nature and makes use of many of the tools used in ethnographic research. Ethnography is a methodological approach that "employs qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs and language that develop over time" (Creswell, 2002, p. 481). Creswell (2002) also maintains that ethnography literally means "writing about groups of people" (p. 480). A group "consists of two or more individuals and it may be large or small" (Creswell, 2002, p. 489). Culture is defined as "everything having to do with human behavior and belief" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 15). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) state, "The purpose of educational ethnography is to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants in educational settings" (p. 17).

Ethnographic tools can provide a unique, qualitative approach

to investigating what young children do when they are given the opportunity for musical play. McMillan (2000) describes ethnographic tools in the following way:

- the use of three primary methods of data collection: observation, interviews, and document analysis.
- work in the naturally occurring setting or context i.e. the "field" (in education this is typically the school or classroom).
- active participation of the researcher with the subjects (researcher can assume one of four different roles). McMillan (2000) reminds us that "in education research it is rare for the investigator literally to adopt the same role as the individuals who are being studied. . . .The researcher interacts with the participants to establish a rapport and a relationship but does not become a member of the group" (p. 259).
- researcher uses recorded unstructured observations as brief notes or field notes (written description of what has been observed). Field notes can be detailed descriptions including direct quotes or close approximations of what was said and/or reflective writing i.e. thoughts about emerging themes and patterns.
- data that is summarized and coded followed by the emergence and development of themes.

Ethnographic tools used in this study were as follows:

- data collection through observation
- work in the "field"
- researcher as participant observer
- use of field notes for recording that which was observed
- development of themes from the data

Case study research is often used in conjunction with

ethnographic research or the use of ethnographic tools. Creswell (2002) informs us that "when case study writers research a group, they may be more interested in describing the activities of the group" (p. 484). Stake (1988) emphasizes that "case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied" (p. 86). According to Stake (1988), the case may be simple or complex --- it could be a child or a classroom of children. In this study the case is a single classroom of children. Case study involves both the process of learning about the case and the product of the learning. Creswell (2002) describes a case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. 'Bounded' means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries" (p. 485).

This case study involved an in-depth exploration of the musical play behaviours of one classroom of junior kindergarten children who had the opportunity to be involved in musical play.

Research Design

Ethnographic tools were utilized in this study to observe and document the behaviours of 18 junior kindergarten children as they engaged in musical play. Goetz & LeCompte (1984) describe educational ethnography as representing "an investigative process, a way of studying human behavior" (p. 13). This study can be regarded as a microethnography because of the small size of the case and the relatively short time spent by the researcher in the field. Microethnography, according to Spindler (1982), is regarded as "observation of interaction in a limited setting"(p. 98). Erikson & Mohatt (1982) describe microethnography as "focused ethnography"

(p. 133) that uses "direct observation, videotaping, and interviews as research techniques" (p. 135). Finnan's (1982) study of spontaneous play is acknowledged by Spindler (1982) as an example of a microethnographic study, in that her focus is on a relatively narrow range of behaviors included in spontaneous play" (p. 311). Finnan (1982) felt that ethnography was well suited to studying children's spontaneous play because "it [ethnography] is unobtrusive and nondirective. Ethnographers try to blend into the background and watch children play as they normally play" (p. 377). Bogdan & Bilken (1992) state that microethnography "most often . . . refers to case studies done on either very small units of organization (e.g. a part of a classroom) or on a very specific organizational activity (e.g. children learning how to draw)" (p. 66).

In reviewing the purpose of this study, (the activities of children as they engage in musical play) it appears that the research question would be well answered by the use of microethnographical case study design that utilizes many of the tools found in ethnographic research.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study is one of participant observer. Goetz & LeCompte (1984) confirm that "participant observation is the primary technique used by ethnographers to gain access to data. They describe participant observation as a "nonjudgmental strategy for acquiring data to depict social groups and cultural scenes authentically"(p. 111). Philips (1982) views the participant observer as having a role that "enable[s] the investigator to see things from at least one structural position of membership in the system being studied and to acquire in-depth knowledge" (p. 205).

Wilcox (1982) describes the role as "lengthy and intimate . . . while minimizing the degree to which our [the researcher's] presence affect[s] interactions among people" (p. 276).

Bogdan & Bilken (1992) agree that although the participant observer must exhibit empathy and maintain a trusting relationship with those in the study, he/she must also stay detached. When researchers engage in participant observation they watch what people do, listen to what people say, and interact with participants "such that they become learners to be socialized into the group under investigation" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 112). We are also reminded of McMillan's stance regarding the investigator's role in educational research as being one of establishing rapport and relationships but not becoming a group member (McMillan, 2000, p. 259).

My role as the participant observer was to prepare and provide the musical play environment in the classroom and lead the short beginning and ending whole group activities of each musical play session. I also observed the children during the play period. This was accomplished by remaining at the side and not interfering with the children's musical play.

Background of the Researcher

I received my Bachelor of Education degree with a major in elementary music from a large western Canadian university. Since that time I have had over thirty years experience as an elementary school music specialist, an elementary classroom teacher, and a music consultant for a large school district in western Canada. I have taught pre-kindergarten and primary school children in Canadian and

International school settings as well as in a privately operated early childhood music/dance studio. I have studied music and early childhood at the undergraduate and graduate levels with Canadian and American leaders in the field. The depth of understanding that I have in the area of young children, teaching, play, and music provide a solid foundation for my role as participant observer and researcher in this study.

Inspiration for the study came as a result of my participation in several university classes both in early childhood and music education. Through readings, discussions, reflections, and writing I was exposed to new ways of thinking about education in the early childhood classroom. I then began to relate my new understandings to early childhood music teaching and learning.

My own structured teaching style had always met with much success and parents and administrators were always very pleased and impressed with the results of the program that I offered. The children were happy and left the class having attained many music skills. However, once I was exposed to the thoughts, ideas, and theories of educators such as Vygotsky and Malaguzzi I began to examine my own teaching practice and considered how it might be changed. This led to the development of this study on children and musical play.

I believe that my knowledge, understanding, and expertise in the field of early childhood music education enhance my ability to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate the data collected in this study and that my new understanding of how play might contribute to children's learning in music provides me with a questioning outlook and enthusiasm for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Study Sample

Convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this study. McMillan & Schumacher (1989) inform us that convenience sampling (or availability sampling) involves using subjects that are available to the researcher. Creswell (2002) describes participants in a convenience sample as "willing and available to be studied" (p. 167). In the case of convenience sampling, Creswell reminds us that "the researcher can not say with confidence that they are representative of the population. However, the sample can provide useful information for answering questions and hypotheses" (p. 167). McMillan & Schumacher (2000) emphasize that researchers who use convenience sampling may have to execute greater caution in generalizing the results of the research and that the generalizability may be limited to the characteristics of the subjects. Goetz & LeCompte (1984) point out that "many researchers select a group because it is conveniently located and represent a larger population of interest" (p. 69).

The sample chosen for this study was an 18 member class of junior kindergarten children. The class included eight boys and ten girls who were generally four years old. There were very few Junior Kindergarten programs in the western Canadian city where the research took place and because of the accessibility of the program, the Director's positive attitude toward research, and the fact that it was a well established program with children in the appropriate age category, I chose this class of junior kindergarten children as the sample for the study.

The class in which they were enrolled was part of a school

which operates out of a large western Canadian university. This school offered programming for children from junior kindergarten to grade 6. The children came from a range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds and there were no restrictions on enrollment other than the parent's ability to pay, minimum and maximum age, and the ceiling on class size (maximum class size for junior kindergarten was 18 children). The children attended school from 9:00 a.m. until 11:30 am., Monday to Thursday. In addition to the musical play experience offered by the researcher, the children also received a weekly, structured music lesson which was taught by a kindergarten "teaching partner." A "teaching partner" is a staff member who is not a degree holding, certified teacher. Rather, he/she generally holds an early childhood certificate from a local college.

Research Process

The research process involved a series of procedures. Background reading, discussions, and deliberations resulted in the development of the research question. The following steps outline the process that took place once the research question was formulated.

Approval and Access

McMillan (2000) points out the important first two steps in entering the research site: gaining permission and establishing rapport. The following discussion reviews the process that was followed to establish access to the research site. Once the possible research site had been identified, contact had to be made with a person who had the authority to grant research permission (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). The Director of the school was the person with whom I

requested permission to conduct the research.

Discussions with the Director of the School (March 2004)

Several months before the start of the study, the Director and I discussed the research topic. I was then given the opportunity to observe a junior kindergarten class during their regular, weekly music lesson. The Director of the school indicated her support for the research and informed me of many aspects of the school including its philosophy, organization, staff, and clientele. Our discussion assisted with "mapping the field." McMillan & Schumacher (1989) describe this as a process for "acquiring data of the social, spatial and temporal relationships in the site to gain a sense of the total context" (p. 395). The Director expressed her interest in establishing more research opportunities in the school. During this meeting I also had informal discussions with the classroom teachers and the music teacher. We discussed my proposed research and agreed to meet again once the research proposal was fully developed. Access to the site and development of rapport were two important aspects of the study that were achieved during this time.

Observation (May 2004)

I spent another morning of observation in the junior kindergarten classroom while the children participated in their weekly, structured music lesson. At this time I presented the Director with the first draft of my research proposal and we discussed possible dates for the required formal presentation of the research proposal. She was very interested in having the teachers in attendance at the presentation so that they could pose questions, contribute ideas, and provide feedback. Therefore, a convenient date and time had to be considered.

This discussion contributed to the continued, positive development of rapport with the teaching staff.

Research Proposal (May & June 2004)

The first draft of the proposal was presented to the members of the thesis committee for their feedback, questions, and suggestions. Following their responses, I continued to prepare and refine the formal presentation with close attention to the requirements of the Department of Elementary Education.

Ethics Application (July & August 2004)

Prior to the start of any proposed research project in the Faculty of Education, it is the responsibility of the investigator to make application to the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB). As I prepared the Ethics Application, the following considerations required attention: individuals who were to be involved in the proposed research study needed to be informed of the purpose, aims, and the use of the study's results; they needed to know that they had the right to refuse to participate in the study; and they needed to know that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2002). Since the participating children in my proposed study were under age, "captive" subjects; permission for participation had to be requested from parents/guardians of the children.

The Ethics Application included an overview of the research project including the purpose, significance, and design of the proposed study; procedures for compliance with the University of Alberta standards; and copies of the *Invitation to Participate in Research* information letter, the *Informed Consent* form, and the *Confidentiality Agreement* form for research assistants. Attention had been paid to the

details regarding anonymity and it was stated that the children's names would be coded and pseudonyms would be attached to the codes. The right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw at any time was also clearly stated.

The Ethics Application was completed and approved in August 2004. I was then able to proceed with the public presentation of the research proposal.

Department of Elementary Education Requirements (August 2004)

Public presentation of a research proposal is a requirement of the Department of Elementary Education. The Research Proposal and Summary were prepared and distributed to interested staff and students two weeks in advance of the presentation. This presentation included an overview of the research proposal. In attendance were the three members of the thesis committee, the Chair of the Elementary Education Graduate Program, the two junior kindergarten teachers, and several interested graduate students. Following a 40 minute oral presentation, I answered questions and listened to and noted suggestions from members of the audience. Permission was subsequently granted to continue the research process.

Director's Approval (September 2004)

The required approval form for conducting research in the school was completed and submitted along with a copy of the research proposal and the *Ethics Approval* form which included the *Invitation to Participate in Research* letter, the *Informed Consent* form, and the *Confidentiality Agreement* form. Approval to start the research was given by the Director of the school. This process took approximately one week.

Preliminary Data Collection Activities

Locating Research Assistants (September 2004)

The nature of the research required two research assistants who would assume the tasks of videotaping and transcribing the activities of the children during the data collection period. I felt that it would be advantageous to involve assistants who were familiar with children in a music teaching environment. I considered three people who were retired teachers with music teaching experience. Two out of the three were available and willing to spend the required time. The assistant who would be responsible for the videotaping also consented to be present for the rapport building preliminary sessions. This would ensure the children's comfort with the video taping equipment and the additional adult presence in the classroom.

A meeting was held with the research assistants to train and familiarize them with the research proposal. I spent considerable time reviewing their roles and responsibilities. Both felt comfortable with their roles because of their teaching expertise and their extensive experience working with children. They were provided with a copy of the research proposal so that they were aware of and understood the research question and the background information. Both research assistants signed the *Confidentiality Agreement* form and subsequently fulfilled their roles at all data gathering sessions.

Communicating with Teachers (September 2004)

The classroom teachers were consulted from the beginning of the study. They were involved in several discussions regarding the study and provided the researcher with advice regarding the best choice of day and time for the data to be gathered. They assisted the

researcher by providing access to the classroom space and equipment which was to be used. They also provided invaluable assistance with the distribution and collection of *Parent Information* letters and the *Informed Consent* forms.

Informing and Meeting Parents (September 2004)

Parents were informed of the research through an *Information* letter that was distributed through parent mailboxes which were located in the classroom in close proximity to their child's personal belongings. Important school communications were regularly placed in these mailboxes for parents to collect. I was available on two days to answer parent questions and concerns regarding the research. Some parents were interested in speaking to me about the research and what it involved. All parents signed and returned the *Informed Consent* forms. One hundred per cent of the parents agreed to have their children participate in the study. All forms were received by the researcher prior to the start date of the data collection.

Rapport Building with the Children

I conducted three musical play sessions with the children at the research site prior to the data collection. These sessions were conducted weekly for approximately 45 minutes on each day. The purpose of the sessions was to familiarize the children with me and my role, the equipment, and the presence of other adults (the research assistants). Data was not collected during these sessions, although I kept a reflective journal of field notes. One of the research assistants was on hand with the video camera, but no filming took place. This procedure met with the specifications of the Ethics approval. During the three sessions the children became familiar and comfortable with

my role, the research procedures, and the research assistants' presence.

Field Work

The field work took place over a period of nine consecutive weeks. On one day of each week the children had an opportunity to be involved in musical play activities. The first three sessions were used to build rapport and the final six sessions were used to collect data. The children participated in a short whole group lesson at the beginning and end of each musical play lesson. This provided an introduction and conclusion for each session and also assisted with the children's transition from one activity to the next. The children participated in musical play activities of their own choice for the rest of the 45 minute session.

The site of the field work was an extra classroom adjacent to the junior kindergarten classroom. This classroom was generally used for special activities (e.g. guest speakers) as well as for the children's regular scheduled weekly music classes. Therefore, the children were familiar with the space. The classroom was relatively large and could accommodate some movement. Four round tables with small chairs stood around the perimeter of the room. Musical instruments were stored in a large locked cupboard and under a table. Those under the table were covered by a large cloth. A few music related posters hung on the walls and the floor was carpeted. The room had no natural light because it was located in the basement of a university building.

During the period of musical play I stood at the periphery of the activities and did not attempt to influence the play. I spent this time observing so that I could later record my thoughts and observations as

field notes.

The research assistants made a great effort to record in as much detail as possible the activities of the children as they participated in musical play. The weekly field notes were kept in one journal. Following each day of videotaping, the tapes were transferred by the researcher to DVD for viewing, transcribing, and interpreting.

The organization of the equipment and materials at the site varied with each data collection period. Some materials and equipment remained constant while others were added or removed. This provided a combination of both variety and consistency in the children's choices.

Examples of equipment and materials that were included:

- Unpitched percussion instruments: drums, finger cymbals, claves, sand blocks, guiros, wood blocks, rain stick etc.
- Pitched percussion instruments: Orff instruments including bass and alto xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels; individual melody bells
- Puppets and other hand held manipulatives
- Music related books
- Variety of colourful scarves
- CD's and CD player
- Paper, crayons, pencils and coloured felt markers
- Felt staves and notes
- Music notes made from plastic
- Rhythm flash cards
- Music charts (from music series books, e.g. *Musicanada, Share the Music*)

Data Collection

Data was collected in four ways: video taping, transcriber's notes and observations, artifact collections, and researcher's field note journal entries. During each of six musical play times the children were observed and video taped for approximately 45 minutes.

The two research assistants had separate duties which they maintained for the entire data collection period. One research assistant video taped the children as they engaged in musical play activities. She used a digital video camera. Later I transferred the information to DVD for my viewing.

The second research assistant recorded her observations, thoughts, and ideas in the form of field notes. These notes became part of the total collection of data from the sessions. Occasionally the classroom teachers contributed their observations and these were included with the transcriber's notes.

I kept a reflective journal which included field notes of my observations and thoughts. Some artifacts, such as children's drawings and music notation which the children shared with either the classroom teachers or me, were also collected and added to the data. Data collected through transcribed observations, video tapes, artifact collections, and reflective journal notations were collected and compiled into field notes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Overview

The data analysis procedures and an introduction to the research findings are presented in this chapter. The data reduction and interpretation process will be discussed, followed by the analysis of data and the findings that are related to the research question.

Data Reduction and Interpretation

Ethnographic research involves studies that are exploratory or discovery oriented (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 382). At the beginning of an ethnographic study, most ethnographers record everything of interest. This is followed by recordings that are successively narrowed until legitimate analytic units emerge (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 168). The data for the study was collected in the following ways: digital video camera sounds and images, transcribed observations, reflective journal entries, and artifacts. These were compiled into field notes.

The process of compiling and reducing the data required the transfer of information by the researcher from digital video camera to DVD. The results of the process provided ease of access to the films. I viewed each of the DVD's a minimum of two times and made careful notes of each observation.

The transcriber's notes were carefully reviewed and chronologically organized so they could be included with the notes

from the DVD's. My reflective journal entries were also arranged chronologically and added to each day's DVD and transcriber's notes. The artifacts were compiled, labeled, and filed.

When all of the data had been chronologically organized I began to categorize the data by making comparisons. As several categories began to emerge, I colour coded the data accordingly. The colour coding enabled me to visually identify the emerging categories as I reminded myself of the research question. The personal knowledge of music curriculum which I brought to the study assisted me in seeing the emergence of the categories. The extensive work that was involved in compiling and reducing the data and developing the catgories was very detailed and time consuming.

The following process, described in McMillan & Schumacher (1989, p. 417), reviews strategies for categorizing, sorting, and ordering data in an ethnographic study:

1. Categorize by constant comparison.
2. Sort each instance several ways (sometimes called "coding") to identify patterns.
3. Identify the attributes of each potential category and state a "tentative name" the preferred name is one that comes from the data.
4. Order the categories: through divergent thinking, patterns and themes are refined.

The coding and sorting of the data was followed by the establishment of categories. Because the focus of the research question was activity based, (i.e. "What do children do when they are given the opportunity for musical play?") I based the category development on activity codes, "codes that are directed at regularly occurring kinds of behavior" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992, p. 170). My experience as a music

teacher also influenced the way in which I viewed the data and consequently the initial categories emerged in the following way:

- Singing
- Playing Instruments
- Moving
- Reading Music
- Writing Music
- Listening
- Dramatizing
- Non-Music Behaviours

The discussion which follows, introduces the categories as they emerged on each of the data collection days. The categories cover the span of the data collection and the reader should keep in mind that activities from each of the categories occurred during most observations. For the protection and privacy of the children and to meet the requirements of the Ethics Approval, pseudonyms were assigned to each child.

A summary follows each of the initial categories. As I looked more deeply another layer emerged and from this layer, the following themes were established:

- Music Literacy
- Cognition
- Creativity
- Emotional Development and Socialization

Finnan (1982) reminds us that one of the reasons there are very few studies that deal with children's spontaneous play is for the simple fact that "most research methodologies are not suited to studying anything so seemingly chaotic" (p. 359). Organizing all that went on during each day of musical play was indeed a challenge! Anyone

visiting the school during this play time was amazed at the visual chaos and the tremendous amount of sound that wafted from the classroom. One visitor was heard to say,"I could hear the sounds of the children all the way down to the elevators!"

Singing

Singing was a part of each of the rapport building sessions and was also included during most of the introductory and concluding portions of the observations. The short, introductory group lessons were designed to help focus the children and prepare them for their musical play time. As the children sang together during the introductory times, many were eager to sing both with the group and by themselves. I always opened the music time with a short song of greeting after which I invited the children to respond to a puppet, either by singing alone or as a member of the group. On one of the first days I invited the children to individually come and sing and manipulate a puppet. All of the children anxiously awaited their turns. They sang in a variety of ways from very confident, in-tune singing to very shy, reserved, quiet singing. Only one child came for a turn and did not sing. He remarked, "I only want to play with the puppet." All of the other children sang individually.

The transcriber observed on many occasions that during the group singing times the children were "very responsive" and that they were "singing very well in tune." The children were encouraged to respond with singing while I displayed books like "Three Little Kittens" and "Teddy Bear." I did not coach the children or teach the songs by rote but rather invited the children to join in singing by singing along with me or answering singing questions with singing

answers (e.g. "Who is wearing red today?")

Once the children left the whole group lesson time, they were invited and encouraged to engage in musical play and could choose and use any of the materials, move to any space in the classroom, and play alone or with others.

Observation 1

Andrea and Melissa are very good friends and they enjoyed sitting together and looking at the book, "Teddy Bear." This book had also been used in the whole group lesson. The children happily sang and looked at the book.

At the same time, Shaila noticed the *Musicanada* Big Book that was propped against one of the walls. She poured through the huge pages, found the song "Teddy Bear," and began to follow the notation with her finger, moving from left to right as she sang the song. I had used neither the Big Book nor the activity of following music from left to right in the large-group lesson.

Many of the children loved to play with the puppets. They often responded musically as they manipulated the multi- coloured figures. Penny especially loved to hold a large duck puppet and she played with it on most days of the study. Even if she was participating in other activities she often had the duck puppet close by her side. She sang her own version of "Swim Little Duck" as she swooped around the classroom, in and out of groups of children.

Nader and Bobby were fascinated by the array of finger puppets with which they could play. They crowded the puppets on their fingers and sang their own songs while they chased each other around the classroom. James enjoyed playing with a flower pot puppet and while he played with the puppet he chanted rhythmically,

"flowers, flowers, flower pot flowers" as an introduction to his own song.

Greg, Brent, and Zia demonstrated their wide vocal range as they sang and dramatized with their chosen puppets. They loved to experiment with many different kinds of voices!

Observation 2

Children in groups of two or three happily looked at books and sang on the second day of the data collection. Many children experimented with vocal sounds. James let out a roar, Andrea screamed, and then there was a response of "Too loud!" from Greg. Puppets continued to be a source of inspiration for the improvised songs of many children. Singing, however, did not seem to play a major role on this second day. Most children were engaged in other forms of musical play (e.g. playing instruments).

Observation 3

At the beginning of the whole group lesson, I introduced a book to accompany the song "Old MacDonald." Most children were familiar with the song, although, for many,the cumulative aspect was somewhat challenging. They often needed prompting with the order of the animals in the song. Prompts in the form of pictures on a chart or book helped them recall the order of the song. We sang part of the song together and then I remarked that the children might like to sing the song on their own and perhaps use the book. Shaila was very concerned about singing the song correctly and said "But we don't know the words." I assured the children that it would be fine to make up their own words. After this, the research assistants and I observed children as they made up their own lyrics or used the book as a

prompt.

During this observation the children were presented with felt notes and felt staves with which they could play. James could be heard singing after he used these new manipulatives to write his own song.

The classroom teachers were present during all of the data collection sessions and several children enjoyed inviting them to join in reading and singing along with books such as *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly.*

The children were observed by the transcriber as being "very enthusiastic" and "always using their singing voices." She overheard Greg say "I want to sing the song longer." Brent sang his own song as he accompanied himself on the woodblock. The transcriber remarked that she had "never heard the song before." As was reported earlier, sometimes children protested when others sang too loudly as Thomas did when James got "carried away" with his enthusiastic singing.

As the research project progressed, I wondered if the presentation of more props, manipulatives, and books would encourage even more singing. I continued to observe Penny as she sang and manipulated the duck puppet. Her enthusiasm drew Nadia into the singing and together they sang a beautiful duet of "Swim Little Duck." Small groups of children, as well as individuals, enjoyed looking at books and singing. Some children sang their own compositions.

Observation 4

Observation 4 witnessed many of the children engaged in singing nursery songs that they had learned in their homes, from television, CD's, and structured music classes. A book and some felt figures of "Old MacDonald" appeared to be a motivator for many

children. They responded through singing in a variety of ways. James sang "Scooby, Scooby, Scooby Doo" followed by "Old MacDonald." Greg and Brent created music on a felt staff and then followed the music and sang "Old MacDonald." While they sang they also accurately played the rhythm of the words on their chosen unpitched percussion instruments. Nadia, a child who had recently arrived from a country in the Middle East and had a limited English vocabulary, used the felt pictures for "Old MacDonald." She arranged the pictures on the felt board and then sang the song. Her arrangement of pictures showed Old Macdonald in the centre of the board and a row of animals stretched across the top of the board.

The book, *I Know a Cold Lady who Swallowed Some Snow*, proved to be a favourite for many of the children. They were fascinated by the title and indicated that they could see the pattern that related to a well known song they already knew. Melissa and Valerie spent a long time looking at this book and patterned their own rendition of the song.

Once again, Penny was observed singing with the duck puppet. Many children also enjoyed singing spontaneously as they manipulated puppets and looked at their favourite books.

Observation 5

The children focused very intently on their singing on the fifth day of data collection. In the introductory activities the children could be heard singing the animal parts in "Fiddle-i-Fee." Greg remarked that this song was "like a train" (This was his way of visualizing the song and understanding that a cumulative song gets longer and longer like adding cars to a train). They sang their own songs and parts of known songs as they prepared to begin the music play time. Thomas, Brent, and Nader were heard singing segments of the theme of "In the

Hall of the Mountain King" (a recorded piece to which they had previously listened). As the children played, I could hear them singing and making many alterations in their vocalizing as was dictated by their dramatic play.

Books continued to be an inspiration for singing, and as Robby and Zia enjoyed "Three Little Kittens," they sang and pointed to the words. Melissa led other children in singing "Five Little Ducks" as she manipulated the duck puppet. A few children sang "Teddy Bear" and Brent mentioned that he had learned the same song at his swimming lessons.

The transcriber observed Thomas as he sang the melody of the theme of "In the Hall of the Mountain King." He also included gestures of the rhythm pattern along with the singing. The transcriber pointed out that the children were "responding with interest and enthusiasm."

Observation 6

The children were very energetic on the final day of data collection. They participated enthusiastically in the introductory singing activities when they were asked to respond to singing questions with their own singing answers. Everyone wanted a turn to sing! The children vocalized and many long "oooo" sounds were heard throughout the class. As the children were involved in dramatizations, phrases based on the so-mi-la tone set were heard. *Harry Potter* seemed to be a favourite topic for dramatizations. Some children still demonstrated their interest in books and spent time looking at books and singing both by themselves and with friends.

Summary

During each of the observation periods, the children were engaged in a variety of singing activities. These included performing previously known songs, their own newly composed songs, vocal explorations, and improvisations. The children used singing as both a shared and a solitary activity. Their songs, motifs, and melodic fragments were often (but not always) based on the so-mi-la tone set and were generally rhythmically simple (often composed of combinations of and). The following themes emerged as I examined the singing activities in which the children participated.

1. Music Literacy

Books, charts, and other visual props (e.g. felt board figures) were often used by the children as stimuli for singing. As they sang, they often "pretended" to read both the words and the music notation while they pointed at notes and words and read from left to right. Patterning was evident as they demonstrated their understanding of similarities and differences in songs. These behaviours all suggest the development of the skills of beginning literacy.

2. Cognition

The development and use of of cognitive skills was evidenced by the children as they engaged in conversations, answered questions, and expressed opinions about songs, their own singing, and the singing of others.

During play, the children displayed their acquisition of musical memory as they accurately sang entire songs, song fragments, and instrumental themes from recordings. These vocalized melodies and

lyrics were often heard as the children played with puppets, danced, and performed on instruments.

Children made decisions as they sang. They decided on whether or not to accompany their singing with instruments. They also made decisions regarding the instruments that best suited their songs. They chose to either sing alone or with others and also made decisions on their choices of songs. Thinking, decision making, and aesthetic choices were consistently displayed as the children engaged in singing.

3. Creativity

While the children participated in musical play, they were often heard singing songs which they had created. These were sometimes based on previously heard songs. They created their own versions of songs that suited their needs at the time. Their singing was often spontaneous and improvised and the children also explored and experimented with a variety of different vocal qualities. A few children demonstrated their hesitancy to sing a song that might not be completely accurate.

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

There was evidence of positive attitudes toward singing. On several occasions the interest and enthusiasm for singing was observed and noted. As well as the development of positive attitudes, the children were also observed cooperating with each other as they shared books and other materials (e.g. scarves and puppets) while they sang in pairs or small groups.

Playing Instruments

Playing instruments was generally not a part of the introductory portions of each lesson, with the exception of short discussions on topics such as instrument timbre and care and respect for instruments. The children engaged in group conversations on topics such as: "What kinds of things can you do with instruments?" The children responded with many interesting answers including "shake," "play drums," "shake a maracas," "I can draw an instrument," "My dad has a huge drum and a little one," and "I want to play a drum." In discussions about caring for instruments the children contributed many ideas about "sharing instruments with a friend." On only two separate occasions were instruments damaged. Melissa came to me and said that she had played the guiro and a small piece located near one of the holes had broken. Brent admitted to having played the drum and damaged the head. I believe that these two instances clearly demonstrated the responsible behaviour of the children as they handled instruments in the unstructured environment. The children played and used instruments in a variety of ways. Their instrumental experiences are outlined in the synopsis which follows.

Observation 1

The children were very happy to be able to have the freedom to experiment and play with instruments with very few restrictions, other than those associated with safety and care. I gave short reminders about these two issues during the introductory, whole group lessons. During Observation 1 the children were seen experimenting and testing the sounds of various instruments. The

transcriber noted that Nader performed on the bass xylophone "with flair - as if he was on stage in a performing role." He then asked other children to join him. Melissa played very carefully on the coloured dots that had, at some other time, been attached to the bars of an alto xylophone. She repeated her melody for almost ten minutes. Andrea repeatedly played one note on the alto xylophone. Robby and Michael also performed on xylophones. Michael played first and then he was imitated by Robby. Greg enjoyed using many mallets as he played the xylophone. One of the research assistants watched as Greg skillfully handled two mallets in each hand.

A large group of children experimented with sounds from an array of instruments found on one of the tables. Valerie loved to walk with a rainstick. As she moved it from side to side she put her ear close to the stick and listened closely to its sound.

"This is my violin!" proclaimed a group of children as they proudly walked around the classroom with guiros perched on their shoulders, "violin-style." A rhythm stick served as the bow. Children often found unique ways to play the instruments.

As the children experimented with instruments and sounds, two boys used rhythm sticks as mallets when they performed on the drums. They played so loudly and with such force that the drum heads were broken. This was the first of two instances of damage being done to instruments. The children later came to me without prompting, and told what had happened.

Sometimes as children listened to recorded music they accompanied the pieces with their own improvised sounds. Melissa played the finger cymbals as she listened to "Aquarium" from *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saens. Her choice of instrument matched the light, serene sounds of the piece.

Several children enjoyed playing instruments as they marched or walked around the classroom. Their choices of instruments included jingle clogs (one in each hand), drums, triangles, shaker eggs, and finger cymbals. Valerie and Emily organized several drums on the floor and then set out to plan their drumming composition.

Experimenting with unique ways of playing instruments was also observed on the first day. Michelle played the xylophone with her finger tips, Zia scraped the guiro on the serrated side and then turned it over to listen to the sound that the same scraping motion made on the smooth side of the instrument. Penny was noticed as she slid the guiro across her face to feel its texture.

Observation 2

As the data collection continued, children continued to show great interest in using instruments. They also enjoyed instructing each other on what they considered to be correct playing techniques. Valerie said, "This is how you play," as she showed Melissa the techniques for playing both the sandblocks and the xylophone. As Robby showed Nader the rain stick he said, "You hold them like this."

Ordering and playing instruments from low to high and high to low were activities that were observed being performed by several children. Andrea played an ascending and descending scale with one mallet on the xylophone. Sasha sequenced the resonator bells from smallest to largest. The bass xylophone had been set up in the C pentatonic scale. Emily reorganized the bars and then added bars from an alto xylophone so that all of the spaces would be filled. (At this point the school's music teacher extinguished the play and attempted to instruct the child on the "correct" way to play).

Children enjoyed using instruments to accompany themselves

or others as they moved or danced. Nader played several beats on a drum, did his own dance, and then continued with his drumming. He repeated this pattern many times. As James danced and sang "Five Little Ducks" Brent accompanied him on the resonator bells. In the concluding part of the lesson I sang "Swim Little Duck" with the children. During this time Zia got up from the group and accompanied us on the resonator bells. He had also spent a considerable amount of time playing the resonator bells during the music play time.

During the music play time we heard James playing the drum and counting beats. Shaila played the triangle and then announced, "This sound, it rings!" Nader and Bobby discussed the differences in drum sounds as they played together.

The children once again enjoyed playing the instruments in a variety of ways. Valerie scraped a guiro as it lay on the table. Thomas set up a variety of drums on the floor and played as if it was a drum set. Michelle played back and forth on two drums in a "bongo-like" style.

Observation 3

New play materials encouraged children to try new activities. With the introduction of felt notes and staves many children were involved in composing. As a result of this, we observed children playing their compositions on instruments of their choice. They also enjoyed accompanying their own singing with instruments. James composed a piece of music using notes and staves and then he performed his musical work on sand blocks. Thomas, Brent, and Robby played their composition together on the guiro and finger cymbals, and then added wood blocks. Thomas sang with enthusiasm as the other two boys accompanied.

Books continued to provide a stimulus for music making. As Emily and Sasha looked at "Drumheller Dinosaur Dance," they played woodblocks and pretended to read the book. In another part of the room, Shaila used a wood block to simulate door knocking as she improvised a story. In the final portion of the music play time I showed the book "Fiddle-i Fee" and sang the song to the children. We were accompanied by a few children who spontaneously performed the beat on finger cymbals and a drum.

Playing instruments in many different ways continued to be of interest to the children. Penny had her duck puppet play the drum. Michelle and Valerie enjoyed playing the tambourines together. They sat side by side in a chair, laid the tambourines in their laps, and together they happily tapped. Later they danced through the classroom with the tambourines twirling around their arms.

James used the woodblock to perform a specific rhythmic pattern. He played it over and over many times. Melissa played her guiro as if it were a violin. She enjoyed playing the rhythm of "bow wow, bow wow" several times in response to the song "Fiddle-i-Fee."

Observation 4

Cooperation was a highlight of the fourth observation as children shared and worked together. Valerie and Emily played the resonator bells together, Shaila and Michelle played the xylophone, and Melissa and Sasha shared three drums as they played alternately crossing over one another's arms. Andrea asked Shaila, "Do you want to play this with me? Play the notes." Shaila responded with "I know lots of notes!" Andrea and Nadia tapped their sets of finger cymbals together and Melissa and Sasha moved their set of three drums from the floor to the table where they continued their cooperative play.

James and Brent organized five drums and together they played an intricate pattern.

Thomas demonstrated his performance expertise by playing resonator bells with two mallets in each hand. Robby alternated hands expertly as he played the drums. Bobby moved his resonator bells in front of a large mirror and watched himself from both the front and the side as he played individual notes and glissandos. Nader with his woodblock, joined Bobby, and together they played and discussed music as they watched each other in the mirror. Valerie asked Melissa to join her as she played the maracas.

At the conclusion of the lesson, as we sang "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" together, several children added their own instrumental improvisations. Greg played the exact rhythm of "swallowed a fly" on the wood block. The classroom teachers attempted to stop the children from playing at this time for I believe that they thought the children should only be singing. They were very well meaning in their attempts to assist with managing the children, although I had not indicated that I wanted the children to stop playing, in fact it was the opposite. The children often continued to quietly play their instruments.

Observation 5

"Let's make a band!" exclaimed Thomas at the beginning of the fifth day of data collection. He and Brent circulated throughout the classroom and gathered as many instruments as they could carry. With their arms loaded with drums, mallets, maracas, finger cymbals, and wood blocks they established their band and arranged the instruments in a corner behind one of the tables. Thomas tried to recruit more members as he visited groups of children, encouraging

them to join the band. Some accepted the invitation while others, who had already made their musical play choices for the day, could not be swayed.

The band members announced that they were going to play "Itsy bitsy Spider" and proceeded to play together. James was very animated in his performance. He had maracas in one hand and bells in the other while Brent played a steady beat on the drum.

Children who refused membership in the band participated with instruments in a variety of ways. Bobby played the rhythm of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" on the drum. This selection had been introduced to the class at the beginning of the lesson. This rhythm could be heard for a long time as Sasha also repeated it during her play time.

The exploration and performance on instruments continued as Nader played drums, first with alternating hands and then with a small mallet. Penny and Andrea played together with puppets and castanets.

At the end of the music play time as we sang our final song, "Three Little Kittens," the quiet playing of a variety of instruments could be heard as the children accompanied themselves.

Observation 6

Instruments can enhance a dance! With the help of a bright red scarf that was covered with gold music notes, Nader added the improvised sounds of maracas and a triangle to his dance. As he joyfully moved around the classroom he was in his own world of dance, inspired by the sounds of his chosen instruments.

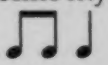
Maracas were transformed into motorcycle handlebars for Thomas, as he zoomed around the classroom accompanied by familiar vocal sounds of a speeding motorcycle. On this final day of

musical play, some children still chose to play instruments on their own. This was evidenced by Sasha, as she quietly played the resonator bells, oblivious to all that was going on around her. Some new play materials had been introduced on the final day and many children were focused on movement and dramatization activities. Perhaps this was why we did not observe as much instrument playing. Children were making their own choices.

Summary

Playing instruments was the activity in which the children appeared to engage most often. They enjoyed playing alone and with others and often chose to play one instrument for long periods of time. The following themes emerged as I examined the instrumental activities in which the children participated.

1. Music Literacy

As the children experienced instruments and their sounds during the musical play time, they demonstrated an understanding of music vocabulary as they used such terms as "beat" and "notes." While they manipulated instruments, they ordered and organized sounds from high to low and low to high. They demonstrated an understanding of same and different as well as melodic and rhythmic motif as they repeated melodies and rhythms on pitched and non pitched percussion instruments. Beats were orally counted and performed. Specific rhythm patterns were played (most often consisting of  patterns). Emergent music literacy skills were demonstrated by the children as they were at play.

2. Cognition

Instrumental experiences provided the children many opportunities to demonstrate musical independence, musical memory, problem solving, and application of knowledge. They considered many ways of approaching instrument playing as they experimented with sound and discovered and displayed unique ways of playing instruments. Their attention to detail and their keen observational skills were evident as they imitated performance style and technique. As they played, the children enjoyed pretending that instruments either "became" other instruments or other objects. Musical decisions and aesthetic choices regarding the suitability of instruments to accompany songs, dances, and recorded music were made by the children.

Even though there was a great deal of sound in the classroom, the children were able to focus on the sounds of the instruments that they played. Careful, thoughtful listening and concentration was demonstrated as they produced and listened to the changing sounds of instruments. They made comments about the sounds and often spent long periods of time listening to repeated sounds of single instruments as well as to their own composed rhythmic and melodic motifs.

3. Creativity

The children demonstrated their creativity in many ways as they played instruments. They experimented with sounds and used instruments in unique ways. Melodic and rhythmic motifs were created on instruments and the children used improvised instrumental sounds to accompany their songs and dances and to enhance recorded music.

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

During all of the observation times, the children demonstrated responsible behaviour as they participated in instrument playing. They were cooperative, helpful, and accepting of each other. They willingly shared and often invited others to join in their play. They taught each other playing techniques and engaged in conversations about instruments and sounds. Several of the children were interested in organizing their play and demonstrated skills in division of roles and responsibilities. The children demonstrated tolerance for individual differences as they made choices between solitary and small group play.

Moving

The children were in constant motion during their musical play time. They moved as they responded to recorded music, they moved as they played instruments, and they moved freely around the classroom as they explored their play choices each day. When the children were given the freedom of choice, we repeatedly saw how they naturally incorporated movement into their musical experiences.

Observation 1

The children carefully listened to "Aquarium" by Saint-Saens while they looked at the watercolour paintings in Wildsmith's book *Fishes*. They were intrigued by both the sights and the sounds. When the musical play time began, Emily requested that the "fishy" music be played again so that she could dance. She accompanied her graceful movements with an array of colourful scarves. She responded to

musical cues and demonstrated through movement, her clear understanding of musical phrase. The changes in the music were reflected in the flowing and jumping movements that she used in her dance. She swept through the room on the long phrases and paused briefly at the end of each phrase.

Andrea and Valerie also wanted to move to the music. They used the scarves to enhance their duet by having them tied around their waists and wrists. Sasha watched all of this from a chair at the side of the class. She soon joined in by swaying to the music as she sat and watched the others perform. Andrea and Valerie continued to develop their dance by incorporating leaps and the sounds of the guiro.

Movement was a part of a chasing game in which two children participated. A small group of boys galloped around the classroom and the mallets that they were holding became their swords. Movement was incorporated in many ways into this time of musical play.

Observation 2

A violin-playing cat in the story, *A Little Night Music,* along with Mozart's famous piece of the same name, inspired Melissa to request scarves and a repeated playing of the music so that she could dance. Her movements flowed as she listened and responded to the music. Later, Emily recalled the previous week's experiences and requested that "Aquarium" be played again. She made her finger puppets move along with the music. Several children joined as they made rockets ships and butterflies move to the sounds of Saint-Saens' music.

The end of the lesson was spent recalling many of the songs that the children had performed on previous days. During the singing

of "Swim Little Duck" Robby rose from his seat, picked up one of the scarves, and spontaneously danced as he sang.

Observation 3

When it was introduced on day three, *Drumheller Dinosaur Dance*, immediately became a favourite book for all of the children in the class. As the classroom teacher read the book to a small group of children, Brent spontaneously started to move and dramatize the story for the others in the small group. In another corner of the room, Penny and Nadia danced a duet with the assistance of a duck puppet, a fish covered scarf, and the music of "Aquarium." Later, Penny picked up the fish covered scarf, laid it on the floor, and swam with the duck along the scarf. During the group singing at the end of the lesson, many children were observed quietly moving to the beat while they sang "Fiddle-i-Fee."

Observation 4

Many children's folk songs encourage movement and "Eency Weency Spider" is no exception. The children were familiar with this favourite song and demonstrated a variety of movement responses to it. As we sang the song together in the introductory portion of the lesson, I encouraged the children to create their own movements. When the children entered into their musical play, they danced, played instruments, and improvised their own songs. As James sang "Scooby Scooby Scooby Doo," he happily played and danced. Michelle and Valerie enjoyed creating a puppet dance as they played together.

"Aquarium" was once again requested and today Penny and Nadia danced with scarves, throwing and catching them as they performed. Nader held two scarves and improvised his own dance.

During our short group singing time, Bobby enjoyed moving his arms and then his whole body to the beat of "Three Little Kittens."

Observation 5

Responding to the beat was something that many children did very naturally. As they sang, many tapped, patsched, and swayed to the beat. They loved to include movement with many of their favourite songs (e.g. our hello song, "Fiddle-i-Fee," "Three Little Kittens," and "Swim Little Duck").

On this day, I introduced two new recorded pieces of music: "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from *Peer Gynt* by Grieg and *Popcorn*, a hit from the 1970's by Hot Butter. Both selections elicited movement and dancing from the children. However, even though the new music was enjoyed by all of the children, Emily repeatedly requested her favourite "Aquarium" and played and danced with some newly introduced fish finger puppets. Penny once again used her favourite duck puppet as she danced around the room.

The music of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" was very exciting for the children. They were exuberant, but still focused, in their movements. When they heard the piece, they had much to say and immediately wanted to start telling what they imagined the story behind the music to be. I had not asked them to tell a story about the music but they were anxious, on their own, to include a story. "I think it is about race cars." "To me it sounds like a bad guy." "This music is about a boy being chased by a cat." "It sounds like 'Cat in the Hat' music." "Monsters are coming!" While the music was playing, the children loved to run and chase each other in circles. The limited classroom space made this kind of moving a challenge and at times I had some concerns regarding the safeness of their activities. However,

the children themselves monitored their movements very well.

A group of children reacted with jumping and hopping when they heard "Popcorn." They shouted with glee, "We're doing it again!" The children moved skillfully to the beat without any prompting or coaching.

Even though many of the children were engaged in small group activities there were some who happily responded in their own individual ways. With the assistance of a gold and red scarf, Nader moved dramatically to the music being played. The transcriber wrote,"Nader has been moving with his scarf for a while and is content to do his own thing. Nader choreographs his dance with the scarf, it is so great! It looks like a figure skating event! The kids are so free and they respond very artistically without any inhibition. They are responding more meaningfully."

Observation 6

"Come on - let's go!", exclaimed Melissa as she heard the sounds of Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers" played on the CD player. On the final day of data collection, the children danced and played with large flowers, finger puppets, and scarves. "I have a butterfly that hangs around a flower" sang Melissa as she danced around Valerie's flower. We saw children hopping, twirling , flowing, and sliding as they responded to the music. Soon the large flowers magically became guitars, as the children continued to perform in their own, unique ways.

Nader once again found the gold and red scarf and carefully draped it across his shoulders. This scarf would transform him into a dancer. He later picked up a triangle and used this to accompany his movements. Movement and dancing brought joy, delight, and

excitement to the children's musical play.

Summary

Movement was consistently observed as one of the favourite activities chosen by the children. They responded to recorded music through movement, moved to the sounds of the instruments which they played, and moved with the stimulation of props (e.g. puppets and scarves). Movement was part of improvised dramatizations and spontaneous responses to songs. The children enjoyed moving both individually and in pairs or small groups. On a few occasions a large group of children moved together in response to a piece of recorded music. The children appeared to enjoy the freedom to respond to music through their own choice of movements. Following are the themes that emerged as I examined the children's movement activities.

1. Music Literacy

As the children responded to music through movement, they demonstrated a clear understanding of phrase and phrase length, tempo, and mood. They were able to accurately move to the beat and also perform rhythms through movement.

2. Cognition

The children demonstrated decision making skills as they listened to music, considered their movement choices, and then responded through movement and dance. They were focused as they moved and often chose to add props to enhance their dances. It was evident that they thoughtfully reflected on musical choices when they requested specific pieces to which they wanted to dance. They also

made connections to music and their own stories as they moved during dramatizations of songs, stories, and recorded musical selections.

3. Creativity

Individually, in pairs, and in small groups , the children created dances and movement sequences in response to recorded music, songs, stories, and other stimuli (e.g. puppets).

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

The children used both verbal and non verbal invitations to ask friends to move and dance. They cooperated with each other and respected the movement choices made by others. Individual tastes were acknowledged and respected. Their joyful responses clearly demonstrated their enjoyment and appreciation of the freedom to express themselves through movement.

Reading Music

Reading music was an activity in which the children engaged on a number of different levels. As we observed the children over the data collection period, we saw them engage in reading music in a variety of ways.

Observation 1

When Shaila looked at the *Musicanada* Big Book, she discovered a large chart that showed the song "Teddy Bear." The pictures of bears on the chart caught her attention and she began to sing the song and point to the notation as she sang. She moved her finger from left to

right as she followed the notes during her singing. Shaila was the only child who we observed participating in a music reading activity on the first day of data collection. Some children also listened to music or sang songs while they followed along with picture books.

Observation 2

"If we don't have the notes we couldn't sing," explained Shaila as she showed the music of "Teddy Bear" to a small group of children. Once again the notation of this familiar song was very interesting for Shaila. She continued to look at many of the songs found in the *Musicanada* Big Book and explained that "When you see a sign like this it means you have to stop." At this point in the data collection she, again, was the only child to look for examples of printed music notation.

Observation 3

James used the felt notes and a felt staff to notate five beats. He examined his composition, counted the the notes, and exclaimed, "Five beats!" He proceeded to play his composition on the woodblock. He was reading the music which he had written .

Valerie and Sasha looked at a book containing music notation and together they were engaged in a conversation about music. Melissa and Sasha ordered the felt pictures for "Eency Weency Spider" and then sang as they followed the pictures.

James created another song by using the felt notes and the staves. Once again, he counted the notes and, together with Brent, they played the music. Greg and Bobby arranged notes on three different felt staves. The transcriber observed Greg say as he opened the folded piece of felt, "Let's play this page." Together they sang and

played the first page, followed by the second.

It appeared that the introduction of these manipulatives had sparked an interest in both reading and writing music.

Observation 4

Brent was very interested in composing his own music and spent a long time working on his composition. Once it was completed he played the three different pieces on three different instruments. He clearly showed that he was reading and performing his own composition.

The transcriber described two children who laid a music notation covered scarf on the floor. "They are following the notes on a scarf that has been laid on the floor. Their lips are moving as though they are reading the music!"

Shaila found a chart of the song, "Wheels on the Bus," and followed the music as she sang the song.

We observed the children start to involve themselves in a range of activities which included a variety of aspects of music reading.

Observation 5

Only a few instances of possible music reading were observed on day five. Emily took many rhythm flash cards and arranged them so that all were displayed. Valerie, Andrea, and Sasha manipulated and organized the felt pictures for "Old MacDonald" and "Eency Weency Spider." Once they were arranged in sequence the children followed the pictures and sang the songs.

Observation 6

The children were very actively involved in movement,

dramatizations, and some instrument playing on our final day and therefore there were no observations of children reading music.

Summary

The children recognized music notation and indicated that they had an understanding of reading music. They pointed to the notation and followed the music from left to right as they sang or played instruments. They explored and responded to books, charts, and other play materials that included notation (e.g. a scarf decorated with music notation). Some children used manipulatives such as felt notes and staves to write and then read their own music.

1. Music Literacy

During the music play time there were many examples of the development of music literacy. Pictures in books and charts provided clues and cues which indicated the titles of songs that the children could recognize. The children then were able to follow the notation of known songs. They pointed at the notation and moved their hands from left to right. They recognized and interpreted some musical signs and symbols (e.g. double bar line means stop) and used music terminology (e.g. beat). They also read and performed music which they had written with manipulatives.

2. Cognition

The children demonstrated an understanding of the relationships between symbols and their meanings. They were able to look at the symbols of music and then sing or play as they followed the notation. They also indicated that they could recall musical

sequence as they ordered pictures to correspond to songs and parts of songs. The children then used the pictures to assist them with recalling lyrics.

3. Creativity

The children created unique ways of assisting themselves in reading music. They organized manipulatives (e.g. felt board pictures) to help them in achieving success in reading or recalling songs.

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

The children cooperated with each other as they shared materials and books. They invited others to join them as they read music. Examples of peer teaching were also observed. Children provided each other with musical explanations and gave instructions related to reading music.

Writing Music

The children closely associated writing music with reading music. There have been a number of references to times when the children wrote their own music and then read and performed it. On the first two days of data collection we did not observe the children writing music. One of the tables was equipped with paper, pencils, crayons, and coloured felt markers. When the children chose to participate at this table they usually drew pictures of instruments (Appendix D) or other pictures that were not associated with music (Appendix E). Greg drew a picture which he called "Music Around the Corner" (Appendix F). Dots which may represent music notation are found on the drawing. Evidence of the children's music writing began

to emerge during the third observation.

Observation 3

James, Greg, Bobby, and Brent were very interested in using the felt notes and staves to write their music. Their enthusiasm was contagious and soon Penny also joined in.

Nadia was new to the school on our first day of data collecting (a month into the school year). She had recently moved from a Middle Eastern country and it was most interesting to observe her using the felt notes as she wrote her music from right to left.

James played his composition on a woodblock after he had completed the writing. As Bobby, Greg, Brent, and James played with the notes and staves they were engaged in a lively conversation about their favourite movie, "Scooby Doo."

We observed the children placing notes in horizontal lines and also in chord formations.

"Let's make a music book," called Brent as he encouraged Bobby, Greg, and James to join him. They made a line of several felt staves and were enthusiastically involved in writing and performing. Once they had written their music they liked to perform it on many different instruments. The transcriber remarked that "Brent and Greg are engaged in more controlled play today. They are focused on making music on the staff."

Melissa and Sasha were very interested in sequencing the pictures for the songs "Old MacDonald" and "Eency Weency Spider." This activity was followed by the two girls singing the song while they followed the pictures.

Observation 4

"I made a new song," announced Brent. He had happily

continued the composing which he had started on the previous observation day. James joined him and also said, "We're making a new song." Andrea laid the scarf that was covered with music notation on the floor. She then took some plastic notes and added them to the notation on the scarf. Sasha was also interested in the plastic notes and she counted them as she laid them on the table.

As the morning progressed, the transcriber observed that James and Brent "are totally focused on creating music on felt staves and are not distracted by anything." Later one child from the group was observed "following his composition. He has three pieces of music and three instruments - one for each piece."

Several boys "wrote" "Old MacDonald" on the musical staff. This was followed with a very enthusiastic performance of the song. Bobby suggested, "Now let's make a new song to sing."

Observation 5

The children continued to be involved in music writing with the use of felt staves. Sometimes they worked individually and sometimes they worked in small groups.

Valerie, Andrea, and Sasha were interested in arranging the pictures for "Eency Weency Spider." Later, they attached a felt staff with their notation beside the pictures.

This was the final observation that was made of children writing music. During Observation 6 the children were very actively involved in other activities like moving , listening, and dramatizing.

Summary

The children participated in music writing activities. Paper and

pencil were not generally the tools they used for writing. Instead, the children used manipulatives such as felt notes and staves, rhythm cards, and pictures to notate known songs and their own compositions.

1. Music Literacy

Children followed cultural norms as they wrote music. They wrote from left to right with the exception of one ESL child who wrote from right to left. The children used manipulatives to write music both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal writing resembled melodies and the vertical writing was chord-like. They used pictures to represent songs and song sequences and added notation beside the pictures to represent the melodies.

2. Cognition

Planning and organizing took place as a group of children carefully wrote a music book together. They demonstrated their understanding that a music book would have several pages and decided that each page would be performed on a different instrument. They used music models to help them plan and write their own music.

3. Creativity

The children used a variety of materials (e.g. felt pictures, plastic notes, felt notes and staves) to creatively write their own music. They sometimes used a combination of materials to uniquely create the notation of known songs.

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

While the children wrote music they often engaged in

discussions. The discussion topics ranged from their latest favourite movies and television characters to music composition techniques (e.g. how to arrange the notes). They collaborated, planned, and presented points of view. Enthusiasm for their chosen activities was evident and they often remained focused for long periods of time.

Listening

During the introductory lessons of each day, a piece of recorded music was played for the children. They heard the following musical selections: "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," "Waltz of the Flowers," "Aquarium," "In the Hall of the Mountain King," and "Popcorn." Data from the following observations describe the activities in which the children were involved as they listened.

Observation 1

During the rapport building sessions, the children had been introduced to "Aquarium" from *Carnival of the Animals*. At the request of several children, the music was repeated on the first day of the data collection and Emily enjoyed listening to the music while she looked at the picture book, *Fishes*. One very shy child watched Emily as she enjoyed the book. Gradually, the shy child moved closer and closer so that she too could see the book as the music continued. Emily also responded to the music through her improvised dances. She demonstrated her careful listening by pausing at the phrase endings. Melissa listened to "Aquarium" and played finger cymbals in response to the music.

Observation 2

Shaila moved quickly from one activity to the next. She remembered the book *Fishes* from the previous day of musical play and requested that I play the music that accompanied the book. She listened very intently for a period of time and then left to play with the rainstick. The transcriber remarked, "Shaila wants to experience it all," when she noticed her change activities for the third time. This time she returned to the CD player to listen to "Aquarium."

During the day's closing activities, I sang "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" to the children while I showed them the book. As the song became more and more complex the transcriber noted that the children became more interested and focused in their listening.

Observation 3

A new book, *Drumheller Dinosaur Dance,* was a big hit with the children. I showed the book at the beginning of the class and the children listened carefully to the words of the repeated chorus. Even though there were distractions in the classroom space on that day (large cases of books for a book fair were stored in the classroom and then moved during our music playtime), the children were so interested in listening and commenting on the book that they hardly noticed the change in classroom space. Several children continued this focused listening when they requested that their classroom teacher also read the book.

Melissa and Sasha played with the felt figures of the song "Eency Weency Spider" and listened as one of the teachers passed by singing the song. They continued playing with the figures and then began to sing the song together.

Observation 4

The children were fascinated by the story, *A Little Night Music,* when I read it during the introductory activities. They made many comments about playing a violin and one child told us about his violin lessons. The children listened closely to the length of the sound produced as together we explored the finger cymbals. They sat silently and listened to the sound slowly disappear.

Activity filled the day and although the children were constantly listening to themselves and each other as they sang and played, they did not spend their play time on specific listening activities.

Observation 5

I played a recording of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" during the introductory part of the class. This piece of music created much excitement and the children responded with glee. After the children had made their musical play choices for the day, a group of four gathered around the stereo and requested a repeat of the recording. During the quiet opening section of the piece, the transcriber described the children as "having their ears pasted to the CD player waiting for the chase music to begin." The children leapt to their feet and began to run and chase one another when they heard the crescendo of the music begin.

Observation 6

Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers", some large felt flowers, and an array of finger puppets provided much of the children's focus on the last day of observation. Several children sat very close to the stereo so they could hear every sound. A few children chose to engage in their own quiet activities amidst all of the sound and movement that filled the room. Emily eventually requested "Aquarium" and Sasha

and Andrea looked at books together as they sat in two small chairs at the side of the classroom. Emily listened to "Aquarium" and Sasha and Andrea seemed to be listening to each other sing as they looked at the music picture books.

Summary

The children listened and responded to music in many ways (e.g. moving, playing instruments). They often made requests for music to be repeated in order that they could respond in specific ways. Not only did listening occur as recorded music was played, but the children also demonstrated careful listening while they discussed, sang, and played instruments. The careful listening of the children contributed to their many thoughtful musical responses. The following themes emerged as I examined the listening activities of the children.

1. Music Literacy

As the children listened carefully, they demonstrated through movement their understanding of phrase length and phrase endings. Their focused listening assisted them as they copied songs that were performed by both adults and other children. They made decisions about movement and mood and developed music vocabulary.

2. Cognition

The children's musical memory assisted them in making requests for the playing of songs and recorded works heard previously. Through their careful listening they were also able to recall the musical sequence of recorded selections. They had the ability to anticipate exciting or quiet portions of the musical works.

3. Creativity

Creativity was most often observed in the children's responses to listening (e.g. their movement, their questions, and their comments).

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

Children often served as models for other children. As some children demonstrated careful and thoughtful listening, others would often choose to copy them or join them. They involved themselves in cooperative small group listening and enthusiastically invited others to join them in listening. Their attention spans were very long as they listened and re-listened to recorded music, songs, and music related poems and stories.

Dramatizing

Many children chose to dramatize in a variety of ways. The dramatizations were sometimes related to music and sometimes not. Children used music as inspiration for their dramatizations and often used instruments as props. The following synopsis reviews the observations of the children's dramatizations.

Observation 1

Sometimes musical instruments became other objects during the music play time. We witnessed a guiro and a rhythm stick become a violin and a bow when a group of children proudly announced that they were playing their violins. We also saw those same guiros and mallets turn into swords later in the class. During this first observation,

several children also engaged in a puppet conversation while they played with the many available finger puppets.

Observation 2

Mallets can conveniently become swords and we witnessed that transformation again on the second day of the data collection. Many of the boys loved to have fencing matches with the mallets! Nader was intrigued with the finger puppets, and after placing one puppet on each of his ten fingers, he began to make each one speak. Another small group of children was also engrossed in using puppets during dramatic play.

Observation 3

As the classroom teacher read *Drumheller Dinosaur Dance* to a small group of children, Brent suddenly and spontaneously stood and dramatized the story with no prompting other than his own enthusiasm for the story.

Observation 4

"I'm making a fire," announced Michelle as she vigorously rubbed two rhythm sticks together. This immediately sparked the imaginations of a few others who joined her in the fire-making venture.

Observation 5

"It's the 'Cat in the Hat' song!" exclaimed Thomas. "And the monsters are coming too!" added Brent. The two boys used the music of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" to magically transform themselves into their dramatized characters. The "Cat in the Hat"

chased the "monster" as the music played.

Observation 6

On our final day of musical play we saw guiros become violins and large flowers become guitars. We witnessed the children demonstrating their expertise on their imaginary instruments. Eventually, the flowers also became swords, claves became motor cycle handle bars, and scarves became masks. We overheard a conversation in which some children were making plans to dramatize *Harry Potter*. We also saw children dancing and making up a story about a bee and a flower. This day was full of dramatics and energetic activity! As I called the children for our closing time, I noticed that many children were still very involved in their dramatic play and they did not really want to stop. They would have continued their play for a much longer time.

Summary

Children engaged in dramatizations in a variety of ways and on many different levels. Music-related books, puppets, and instruments all provided inspiration for dramatizations. The dramatizations were only sometimes related to music. The following themes emerged.

1. Music Literacy

The children's development of music literacy was observed in their interpretations of mood, timbre, and musical sequence.

2. Cognition

The children listened carefully to stories, songs, poems, and recorded music. They then developed their dramatizations based on

their listening experiences, materials that were available for play, and other current interests. Their conversations, discussions, and other dialogue indicated that development of language skills took place during periods of dramatization. The children made decisions and choices regarding the location of their dramatic play within the classroom and this indicated that they were aware of setting (e.g. children who decided to "make a band" chose a place behind a table that would suit their organization and was separate from the other children).

3. Creativity

The children used their imaginations in many different ways during their play. Instruments became other instruments (e.g. guiro and rhythm stick became a violin and bow), instruments became other objects (e.g. mallets became swords, a drum became a hat), and play objects became instruments (e.g. large felt flowers became guitars). These were all used as props as the children extended and enhanced their dramatizations.

4. Emotional Development and Socialization

Within the dramatizations, the children were observed cooperating, planning, and organizing. They often invited their peers to participate in dramatizations and would spend long periods of time in focused, dramatic play. They established rules and roles for their dramatic play.

Non-Music Activities

Involvement in music was the major focus of the children

during the study. There were, however, some behaviours that were not related to music. The following overview describes the non music behaviours that were observed.

Observation 1

Several children were unsure of what they could or should do on our first day of musical play. Sasha, first watched from the side for a very long time. Brent wandered around the classroom observing the activities of some of the other children. The transcriber noted that he "engaged in nothing" at the beginning of the playtime. James, Andrea, Thomas, and Bobby immediately headed to the table that was equipped with crayons, pencils, paper, and felt markers. They drew houses and trains and a few children traced the shapes of some small hand drums and a triangle.

Observation 2

On our second day only one child gravitated to the drawing table at the start of the playtime. He was later joined by a group of five who followed the lead of one child. They all began to draw spider's webs as they discussed spiders. The conversation later turned to bats and Hallowe'en costumes.

Observation 3

Once again a small group of children chose to engage in drawing at the beginning of the music play time. Their drawings consisted of things such as spiders (for the second day), my family, and a tree. I commented in my reflections that "they did not write or draw anything musical." The children gradually left the drawing table to explore and participate in musical activities.

Observation 4

I did not include any drawing materials in the children's choices on the fourth period of observation. Instead, I substituted felt notes and staves for the pencils, paper, crayons, and coloured felt markers. I had wondered if children would begin to "write" music if they could use manipulatives. The field notes indicated that all of the children participated in musical play on day 4. We did not observe any non-music behaviour.

Observation 5

Robby was unhappy and wanted his mother to stay with him. She sat and held him during the introductory time and then slowly left the classroom. He spent the rest of the music play time as a non participant. He sat under a table and showed that he was unhappy. We did not interfere or try to coax him into participating. As I noted in my journal, "Only one child did not respond musically and wanted his mother to stay with him. Once she left, he chose to isolate himself from the group. We let him stay by himself."

Observation 6

On the final day, all of the children were very actively engaged in music related activities. Some of the dramatic play could possibly be described as non - music activity. However, the children seemed to be using the recorded music as inspiration for the dramatizations and many of the instruments and other equipment served as their props.

Summary

During the music play time some children chose to participate in activities other than those pertaining to music. As time went on, the number of children who chose not to participate in music grew progressively smaller. The non-music activities in which the children chose to be involved consisted of drawing, colouring, engaging in conversations, and observing others. The following themes emerged from the data.

1. Emotional Development and Socialization

The children used some non music time to socialize with their peers. During this time they engaged in conversations about favourite topics (e.g. Halloween, spiders). Some children also used this time to watch, observe, and learn from other children who were engaged in musical play.

2. Creativity

During the non-music time children engaged in some creative activities that were art-related (e.g. drawing, colouring, and tracing). At first many children gravitated to the table with familiar items such as pencils, paper, and crayons. As the children became more comfortable in the music-play environment, the number of children engaged in non-music related, paper-and-pencil activities steadily decreased until all the children were musically engaged.

Overview

From the data, I observed the children's demonstration of

positive attitudes toward their musical play experiences. They participated for long, uninterrupted periods of time and wanted to be immediately involved when the music playtime began. At the beginning of the study, there were a few children who took their time and observed others before they began to participate fully. Once these children felt they were safe and had decided that they were ready to participate, they too became actively and musically involved.

The children's favourite activities were playing instruments and moving to music. Their participation in these two activities was observed on all days of data collection. As the research continued, their choices of activities expanded to include singing, listening, composing, reading, writing, and dramatizing. The children often chose to be involved in many different music activities each day.

The number of children who chose not to participate in musical play was small and this number decreased as the study progressed. By the end of the data-collection period, most children were participating in musical play for the entire time of the session.

Children treated the instruments and other equipment with respect. They also cooperated with each other as they participated both individually, in pairs, and in small groups.

Many children made thoughtful musical plans and sometimes even carried their plans and ideas over from one week to the next. They enjoyed exploring new instruments and materials and were receptive to listening to new and previously-heard recorded music.

The children developed as musicians over the course of their musical play experience and were observed teaching themselves and each other about music as they played instruments; moved to their own singing, playing, and recorded music; sang many songs; composed, wrote and read music; and dramatized musical stories.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Overview

A brief overview of the study and a summary of the findings are presented in this chapter. Discussion of the findings and implications for teacher practice in early childhood music education are presented. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Review of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to observe, transcribe, and reflect upon the activities of young children as they participated in musical play. After a lengthy elementary music teaching career, with my most recent assignment in primary school music, I began to reflect upon my practice and considered pedagogical practices that might be used, in place of the structured, whole group approach that is commonly employed in primary music teaching.

Upon reviewing the literature that was related to early childhood music pedagogical practices, play, and early childhood, I became aware of the small amount of research that was available in the area of musical play and young children. Even though play has been used as a teaching strategy in early childhood classrooms for decades, there has been very little attention paid to the possibility of using it to promote musical understanding.

Even though many educators have written articles and book chapters encouraging primary teachers to incorporate musical play in their teaching of music, I discovered that there were very few

documented research studies on this topic. I designed the following research question "What do children do when they are given the opportunity to participate in musical play?" to guide this study.

Data were gathered through video tape, transcribed observations, reflective journal entries, and artifact collections. Four year old junior kindergarten children participated in the case study.

This study was limited for two reasons. It involved only one group of four year old junior kindergarten children who are enrolled in a university-based preschool program and the data collection period was relatively short (three weekly lessons of preliminary rapport building followed by six weekly lessons in which the data were gathered.)

From the data, I endeavoured to describe the activities in which children engaged as they participated in musical play. These activities were analyzed and, from this analysis, categories and themes emerged. The interpretation of the developing categories and themes led to an analysis of the activities of children during their periods of musical play.

Findings

Data collected from video tapes, transcribed observations, reflective journal entries, and artifact collections were reduced and organized into categories. The findings then emerged into two distinct layers.

Layer 1

The first layer was composed of the children's clearly observable music and non-music activities: Singing, Playing Instruments, Moving, Reading Music, Writing Music, Listening,

Dramatizing, and Non Music Behaviours. The first six categories are based on preexisting vocabulary that is commonly used to describe activities or skills that are included in elementary school music curriculum guides.

Layer 2

Once the first layer had been identified and analyzed, I looked more deeply at each of the categories to discover broad themes that are related to children's learning. Similar themes emerged from each category associated with the first layer: music literacy, cognition, creativity, and emotional development and socialization.

It appeared that young children who are given opportunities for musical play actively participated in singing, playing instruments, listening, reading music, writing music, and composing music. In addition to these music skills they also participated in dramatization and some non music activities. The music activities in which they participated are those described in the Alberta Education *Program of Studies for Elementary Music* (1989).

Children taught themselves and each other about music while they were at play in an environment that included music equipment and resources. They challenged and encouraged themselves and each other as they participated musically. They cooperated, assisted, discussed, and observed when they were at play. They appeared to appreciate and enjoy the freedom of choice to perform and participate musically either individually or with others. Musical play offered them this option, while traditional large group music classes often insist on everyone in the group performing and working together. While this cooperative aspect of large group instruction is positive in that children learn about cooperating and working together, the idea of individual

experiences is rarely addressed within the structured, large group context.

Children made full use of the music play time. As soon as the music play time started, the children were actively involved in music making (with the exception of a few children who chose to either observe for a period of time or participate in some non-music activities). The number of children who did not participate in musical play decreased significantly as children became familiar with the music-play environment. Children often spent long periods of time focussed on one activity but also knew that they had the option of exploring many aspects of music. No child asked to leave the musical play area, inquired about when the music play time was going to end, or commented on not knowing what to do. Once the music play time began, the focus of the children was centred on their music making.

The trusting environment in which the children participated resulted in purposeful musical exploration and enthusiastic participation. They treated each other, the instruments, and other equipment with care and respect and demonstrated remorse and responsibility on the few occasions when instruments were damaged.

This analysis indicated what children do when they are given opportunities for musical play. They actively explore the skills of music, they teach themselves and each other about many aspects of music, they engage in conversation about music, they use time fully and responsibly with the exploration of sound and individual performance, and they treat music equipment, as well as each other, with care and respect. The study demonstrated the joy with which children participate in musical activities during musical play.

Vygotsky (1978) described play as having a prominent place in children's learning and is noted for his frequently quoted remark:

> Play creates a zone of proximal development in the child. In play, the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is in itself a major source of development. (1978, p. 102)

In this study of musical play, the children were observed in the zone of proximal development on many occasions. These included times when they were composing and reading music.

Vygotsky (1978) also believed that "representational play creates an imaginary situation that permits the child to grapple with unrealizable desires" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 53). Representational play was evidenced as children pretended to play orchestral instruments. We are reminded by Vygotsky (1978) that "the child moves forward essentially through play activity" (pp. 102 - 103).

The children's development of language, literacy, and communication was evident throughout the study. Malaguzzi (1993) advocated basing education on relationships between and among children, parents, teachers, and the environment in order that children are able to develop communication skills and produce "growth of thought and representation through many languages (that is through many modes of symbolically represented ideas such as drawing, painting, modeling, verbal description, numbers, physical movement, drama, puppets etc.)" (p. 11). Malaguzzi (1998 b) informs us that children have one hundred languages, one hundred thoughts and one hundred ways of thinking, playing, and speaking (p. 3). The children in this study show us the many ways they use the language of music to communicate, think, create, and socialize. Musical play creates a zone of proximal development and allows the children to develop one of

their hundred languages - that of music.

Moorhead & Pond's (1978) observations that children naturally use simple instruments was confirmed in this study. The children produced their own music when they were provided with instruments in the play environment.

Many of the conclusions made by Smithrim (1997) were substantiated in this study. When involved in musical play, the children developed and demonstrated individual music skills and abilities and time was used industriously without teacher direction. The findings of this study did not find the unstructured and seemingly chaotic environment to be as much of a negative influence as was noted by Smithrim (1997). The children were allowed considerable amounts of play time during each of the periods of observation and they were also accustomed to a school routine that included following directions and changing activities. Therefore, when they were asked to end the music play time, they complied with the request. I invited them to come and join the group at the end of the observation time; they were given enough time to finish their play, and then they joined the ending activity. I also attempted to make the final group activity one that would appeal to them so that they would want to join the whole group. They were allowed to gradually come to the concluding activity and bring the instruments, puppets etc. along with them to the group.

Berger & Cooper (2003) emphasized the importance of allowing children extended, uninterrupted time for play as well as including appropriate materials in the environment. The attention paid to these details had a positive effect on the results of the study. The Berger & Cooper (2003) study also reminds us of the important role that adults have in the valuing of children's play, including the encouraging and

non-corrective comments made to children while they are at play. The data in this study confirm this observation. On a few occasions the classroom teachers extinguished play through direct instruction, comments, and actions. The results of the Berger & Cooper (2003) study focus specifically on the important role of the adult in the music-play environment.

The advocation of play in the primary school music teaching environment appears to be a worthy ideal. Music educators and researchers have recommended its inclusion in the early childhood music classroom and through this study we are now informed of what children do when they are given opportunities for musical play. They sing, play, move, listen, read, write, and compose music. They also use music as a stimulus for dramatic play. Included with the activities of music, the children also consistently develop skills associated with music literacy, cognition, creativity, and emotional and social development.

Implications for Teaching

Teachers of early childhood music would be well advised to provide children with many opportunities for musical play. This study showed that children who are engaged in musical play can enter a zone of proximal development which demonstrates to the observant, informed teacher, both the interests of the children and the level to which they are ready to progress. Teachers can then be prepared to support and scaffold the musical learning of the children and organize the curriculum, materials, and learning environment to appropriately meet the learning needs and interests of the children.

There are many factors that should be considered when

teachers are preparing to include musical play in an early childhood music program. Music teachers need to be aware of the preconceived ideas and expectations of parents, administrators, and other teachers. Traditionally, early-childhood music programs have been taught in large group settings with a focus on performance results. Music teachers who wish to change and use musical play as part of the music program should be sensitive in their approach to parents, administrators, and other teachers citing the research findings and rationale that support musical play as a viable and valuable teaching/learning strategy. Adults who observe children during musical play may regard the children's activities as noise making rather than music making. This attitude may be one of the most difficult hurdles that music teachers may have to overcome when attempting to incorporate musical play into the early-childhood music curriculum.

Time is a very important factor that must be considered. This study informed us that children engaged in musical play for long periods of time. Teachers must be willing to allow children appropriate periods of time for musical play. Morin (2001) recommends that short periods of musical play time be integrated in the group music lesson. However, in considering the results of this study, I would recommend that children be given the opportunity for longer, uninterrupted periods of musical play time in which teachers can observe the children's activities and develop a partnering relationship based on trust. Teachers can then use their observations and findings to assist them in planning subsequent lessons that include large-group, small-group, and individual musical experiences built on the interests and activities of the children that were observed during their musical play.

The new role of the teacher as partner will be unfamiliar to

many music teachers. The generalist early childhood educator may be more familiar with this role, but perhaps not in the music-teaching context. Introducing music teachers to a new role that includes a teaching balance of musical play, large group instruction, and small group and individual musical challenges and explorations would require professional development led by researchers and teachers who are experienced in working with adults in the areas of children's musical play and change in the area of teaching practice.

For music play to be effective, materials and equipment, including a wide range of appropriate instruments and a variety of puppets, scarves, books, charts, and other manipulatives, must be available for the children's use. As the children use the materials and equipment, adults should refrain from constant intervention and direct instruction. Instead, they should make use of encouraging comments and display positive attitudes towards children during their musical play. The classroom space used for musical play should be welcoming and large enough that children can play and move comfortably and safely as they participate in musical play.

Primary music teachers and other early childhood educators need to be prepared to handle a seemingly noisy and chaotic environment, but with patience, trust, and keen observational skills these teachers will see and hear the many benefits of musical play in the development of music learning in young children. The combination of play experiences, teacher's observations, teacher and child collaboration, and structured music lessons may lead to more appropriately designed early-childhood music experiences that better meet the needs and learning styles of young children.

Music educators need to be inspired to take on new roles and prepare their classrooms so that children can learn about music,

at least in part, within playful contexts that allow for active exploration, social interaction, creative thinking, sharing, and finding meaning in their activities. (Morin, 2001, p. 5)

Suggestions for Further Research

1. The time that was given to this study was relatively short. A follow-up study that includes a longer period of observation would provide researchers and teachers with substantial information on how children might progress musically during continued involvement in musical play.

2. A study that compares the activities of children during musical play in a variety of different early childhood education settings (e.g. day care centres, play schools, structured pre-kindergarten programs, early-childhood music academies and programs) would provide researchers and teachers with more informed data about the possible benefits of including musical play in differing early childhood settings.

3. A study that involves the training of early childhood professionals regarding the implementation of music-play programs and their possible benefits would tell the profession more about the possibilities of a musical play program.

4. A study that documents the thoughts of children as they speak about their experiences and learning in a musical play program would provide researchers and educators another source of information from which they can make curricular decisions.

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Appendix C

Confidentiality Agreement for Research Assistants
Project Title: Children and Musical Play - An Ethnographic Case Study

I, _____, the research assistant, will assist in the data collection for the study "Children and Musical Play."

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Researcher.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) to the Researcher when I have completed the research tasks.

4. after consulting with the Researcher, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher (e.g. information stored on computer hard drive).

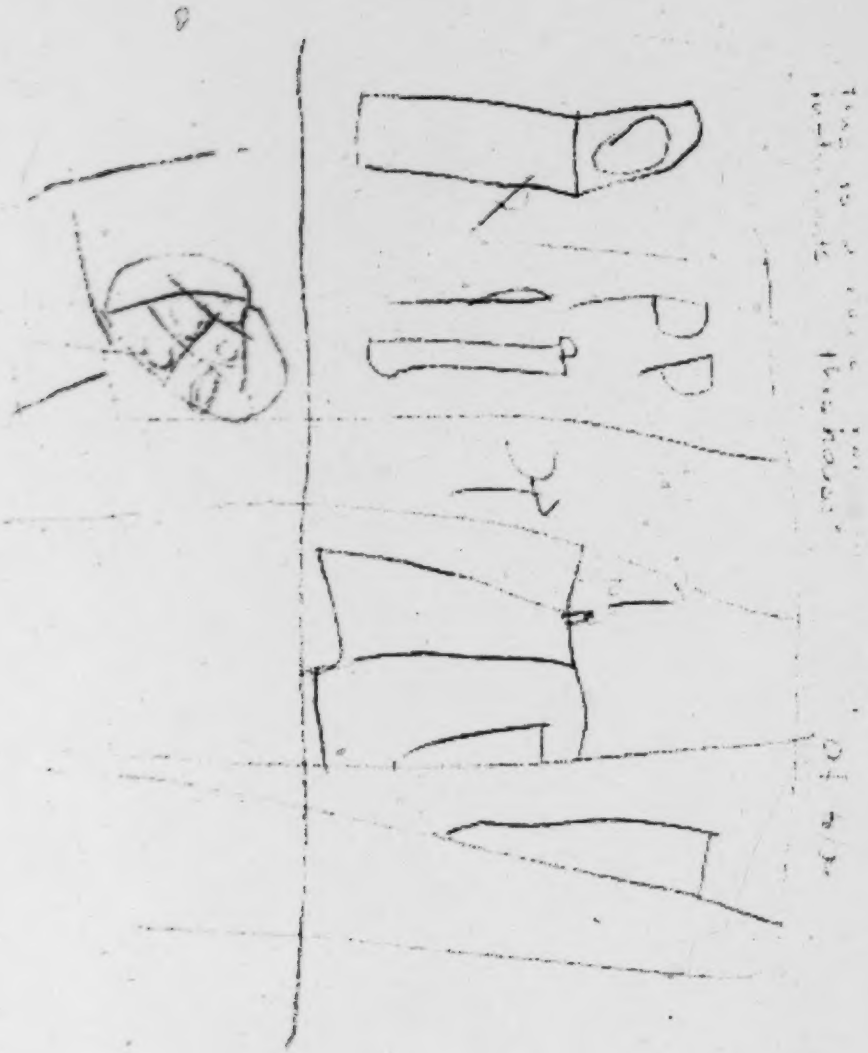
Research Assistant

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Researcher

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Appendix D



Appendix E

Appendix F